

"You Don't Just Stay in One Place": The Intergenerational Pedagogy of Two African American Families in the South

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ABSTRACT
JESSICA S. POWELL: "You Don't Just Stay in One Place"
Culture, Curriculum, and Change
(Under the direction of Professor George Noblit)

This postcritical ethnography shares the intergenerational stories of the Jordan and Cooper families, two African American families living in *Parrish City*, a medium sized city in the southeastern United States. In this study, I explore the Cooper and Jordan family narratives across three generations to understand the varied histories of schooling, education, segregation, and desegregation that are embodied in the stories they share. While the experiences of the Cooper and Jordan families are unique, they also reflect patterns of race and family-school dynamics evident in our culture and society. Their stories describe an intergenerational family pedagogy defined as the moves, choices, and messages shared across generations to support the educational and social mobility of their children and grandchildren. This pedagogy enabled the families to navigate *de jure* and *de facto* segregated communities in hopes for a better future for themselves , their children, and the generations to follow. The family stories not only counter deficit portrayals of the segregated Black communities of the past, but also provide a critique of contemporary schooling. Through thematic interpretations and the conceptual framework of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso,2005), I argue that the family narratives illustrate a strong cultural capital evident though an intergenerational family pedagogy, which has persisted through generations.

~For Eliza~

&

~My Mom and Dad~

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CHAPTER 1

Moving Stories: Turning Toward the Phenomenon

"What the map cuts up the story cuts across." (De Certeau, 1984, p.129)

In my family, my father is the storyteller. In those moments when his mind returns to a faraway place, his eyebrows raise and a smile carves his cheek as he asks, "Have I told you about that time...?" The accurate answer to that that question is almost always, "Yes." I've heard it many times before. But I always, without hesitation, answer "no." It's not that I'm trying to humor him or condescend to an aging mind. Rather, I answer "no" and relish this new moment of an old story as his aging mind, rich with (hi)stories, forms and transforms memories from old to new and back again. Each time it sounds different and feels different. Sometimes I ask new questions and discover that just when I thought I knew the whole story, I learn of new back-stories or trivial details. And other times I simply listen and watch him perform his memories with an embodied connection to his past, present, and future. The roots of this dissertation were tilled decades ago, as a young, Jewish New Yorker growing up in a house of stories. Although my family storytelling tradition is different in many ways from the storytelling of the participants in this study, I attempt to be mindful of my own experiences, histories, and expectations every step I take along this ethnographic path.

The process of this inquiry begins inward, with a reflection of my own histories, experiences, and beliefs, then moves outward to 'interactions with bodies of literature and

participants' embodied histories through story. Then I return inward again to examine my positionality and the interaction of my histories with those of my participants that emerged through our storysharing encounters.

This notion of *movement* helps to conceptualize the ways in which our histories and lived experiences are moved by the stories we share. Ana Tsing (2005) describes movement as threefold: changes in position or location, an emotional response such as desire or aversion, and an alliance of individuals working toward a political, social, or artistic aim. In this inquiry of the moving stories of two African American families in the South, the concept of movement takes all three of these forms. First, their stories move across time and place as they are shared and transformed across generations as well as re-presented by the researcher in the form of this dissertation. Second, through listening and retelling their stories, feelings such as nostalgia, frustration, and hope were evoked by participants, the researcher, and perhaps now the readers of this work. And third, their stories are narratives of movement, addressing the shifts and changes families made to provide better opportunities for subsequent generations. And although the families are not participating in political movements per se, their moves, choices, and values shared across generations are connected to the socio-political context within which they live and represent family members working toward a common aim: intergenerational social and educational mobility.

The stories the families shared in this dissertation are performative encounters. Through our stories we are here and there, then and now simultaneously. We tell stories not to simply recount a memory, or even re-experience one, but to create something new. Minh-ha writes: "Each story is at once a fragment and a whole; a whole within a whole. And the

same story has always been changing, for things that do not shift and grow cannot continue to circulate (1989 p. 123).” In this dissertation, I conceptualize stories as fluid, ephemeral, and dialogical performative encounters. The stories shared across generations are rich with cultural, political, historical and temporal contexts, performing cultural iterations while they transform and create new histories and possibilities. This study moves beyond simply exploring the memories of African American families, but asks “*whose* are they, where do they come from, and how do they operate *in* history, especially insofar as they cultivate the subjects *of* history (Pollock, 1998 p.19)?” This study approaches oral histories as historical actions, not just reflecting on history, but making it.

Throughout this dissertation, the use of the term *stories* should be interpreted as *(hi)stories*. History, when distinct from story, becomes an accumulation of facts in linear form with an emphasis on Truth (Minh-Ha, 1989). However, history that is contingent on our stories reflects truth as local and interpretive. Minh Hah writes that the earliest known stories were memories “transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand (p. 121).” This perception of a story draws on the notion of embodied experiences. While history aims to inform us as to what happened at a particular time and location, stories allow us to experience events sensually and ephemerally in unspecified time and place (Minh-Ha, 1989). *(Hi)stories* can be defined as the interpretive, embodied, and local experiences that reflect an accumulation of our and other’s experiences, invoking our pasts, presents, and futures.

The concept of historicity has shaped how I developed, engaged in, and analyzed this postcritical ethnography. Unlike traditional approaches to history, historicity views human experiences as a dynamic flow of past, present, and future (Hirsch & Stewart,

2005). Emerging out of the phenomenological traditions of Edmond Husserl and Martin Heidegger as well as the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, historicity engages the everyday interactions of individuals as spaces where histories manifest through agency and action (De Lessovoy, 2007; Freire, 2005; Hirsch & Stewart, 2000). Della Pollock (1998), in her work on performance and history, explains, “[I]n historicity, the body practices history” (p.4). In this dissertation, I explore how the stories shared across generations embody history in action, and how this living history speaks to the *white-stream* political discourse on families in education.

Overview of the study: A Postcritical Ethnography

We must have moved four times. But each time, it was an upward move. Now they couldn't understand it then, but I had to put them at ease to say that each move is a better move. You don't just stay in one place. Not when you can do better. So you have to move. And each move has been an upward move. That's just how it is. (Sheryl Jordan)

I want my kids, my grandkids, to be more than what I am. I want those grandkids to continue to do well in school, respect their elders, behave...Be what you want to be. (Thomas Cooper)

[Our teachers] weren't scared to go into the housing project, they weren't afraid to say, "I'll take you home, it's dark." My class growing up may have been the last branch of that tree. So, that has broken. (Melissa Jordan)

This dissertation shares the stories of the Jordan and Cooper families¹, two African American families living in *Parrish City*, a medium sized city in the southeastern United States with a particularly complex history of Black mobility, destructive urban renewal, and community resistance. In this study, I engage family stories to understand the varied histories of Parrish City that are embodied in the everyday lives of its residents. Although this study is focused on local experiences, it also allows us to understand the “broader

¹ Pseudonyms are used for all people and places in this study to protect the anonymity of the participants.

historical currents of our society and world (Butchart, 1986, p.5).” While the experiences of those living in Parrish City are in many ways unique, they also reflect patterns of race and family-school dynamics evident in our culture and society in general. Further, studying *local* may generate ideas and questions that can be further investigated in other communities. Finally, the deeply historical understandings of family and education are played out locally, in schools, neighborhoods, and homes. In this sense, all action is local. This is the scene where families must negotiate with meanings prescribed in educational policy.

I have chosen to approach this study as a postcritical ethnography because I believe it is my obligation to engage in critique not only of institutional and societal structures of power and privilege, but also of myself and the complications I bring to the entire research process. Postcritical ethnography, as proposed by Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, Jr. (2004), problematizes reflexivity, positionality, objectivity, and representation by requiring a critique of both the researcher and the social structures being scrutinized. Postcritical ethnography moves beyond critiques of grand narratives and structures of power and prompts researchers to question their relationship to that which they study and to re-imagine methods of representation that honor the interpretive nature of this research. A more thorough discussion of my positionality and the challenges of this study will be discussed further in the chapters to follow.

Each of the two families included three participants ranging from six to seventy years old. Over a nine month period, I met with the first and second generation participants three times, and the third generation twice. The third interview was a family storysharing event where the whole family gathered to share and reflect on one another's

stories. After completion of the interviews I transcribed and coded each transcript through an iterative analysis process: coding, rethinking, rereading, and coding again. Using Atlas TI, narratives were analyzed cross-sectionally as well as across generations. One major narrative, or overarching storyline, emerged across both families that became the focus of thematic coding: the narrative of social and educational mobility shared across generations through an intergenerational family pedagogy. The following five themes, which emerged from the analysis, will be the subject of discussion in chapter five of this dissertation:

Moving Toward, Staying Away, Staying Together, Representation, Education and Intergenerational Investment. The aforementioned themes will show how an *intergenerational family pedagogy* enabled these two families to navigate *de jure* and *de facto* segregated communities in hopes for a better future for themselves, their children, and the generations to follow. To be clear, this navigation toward educational and social mobility was not in spite of segregation. It was, as their stories suggest, because of it.

The family narratives represented in this dissertation reveal a strong cultural capital that was evident among the families and their communities growing up in the Jim Crow South and persisted through generations. In this dissertation, I argue that the family narratives describe an intergenerational family pedagogy shared among their families, within largely segregated communities, that protected them from some of the oppressive conditions many desegregated schools and communities faced. Growing up in predominately Black neighborhoods and churches and attending public schools with Black teachers and administrators, supported strong cultural identities amid limited opportunities for discriminatory interactions with white individuals. Despite stories of strong cultural capital among their families, schools, and communities spanning Jim Crow through the

years post *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), the families' narratives reveal a strong criticism of contemporary public schools, especially those within *de facto* segregated neighborhoods. The stories expose a shift when segregated *education* (either *de jure* or *de facto*) became segregated *schooling* and was no longer a suitable option for their children and grandchildren.

Mwalimu Shujaa (1994) provides an important framework for the families' critique, in delineating a distinction between *schooling* and *education*. By distinguishing between schooling and education, Shujaa's theory provides a new angle for understanding African American family involvement in education. Schooling can be defined as, "...[A] process *intended* to perpetuate and maintain society's existing power relations and the institutional structures that support those arrangements (p. 15)." In the case of schooling in the United States, the epistemology and values that are transmitted are those held by the dominant class, i.e. white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Education, on the other hand, is defined by Shujaa as:

[T]he process of transmitting from one generation to the next knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and all things that give a particular cultural orientation its uniqueness. Every cultural group must provide for this transmission process or it will cease to exist. (p.15)

Therefore, while white European-American students may experience *education* in schools, African American students are more likely to experience *schooling* since their home cultural orientations are often not represented in the classroom or curriculum. Recent qualitative studies have suggested that while *education* for Black students may not readily occur in schools, it may seek refuge within the curriculum of their homes. This dissertation intends to explore this distinction by widening the scope of what constitutes educational

experiences in the home and community.

Guiding Questions

A thorough study of the literature on parent involvement in education as well as the rich historiography of school segregation and desegregation has led me to the following broad question: What are the stories of schooling, education, segregation and desegregation across three generations within two African American families and how might these experiences speak to the contemporary view of family-school relationships? This dissertation hopes to respond to this question by exploring the interconnectedness of memory and history embodied in the Cooper and Jordan family stories of their everyday lives. Stemming from the above broad question, the following research questions will guide this inquiry:

1. What are the stories of segregation, desegregation, schooling, and education that are shared across generations within the family?
2. What are the continuities or discontinuities of these stories as they are represented across generations?
3. How do the stories perform a critique (or not) of the dominant discourse and/or counter narratives of African American families and their relationship to education?
4. How do these stories perform a critique (or not) of contemporary schooling and education?

Conceptual Framework-Mobility, Intergenerational Family Pedagogy, and Cultural Wealth

“We reconceptualize the ways we know the world not to update our abstractions, but to confirm Sartre’s conviction that to name something is to change the world. Thus to reconceptualize is to reform. (Grumet, 1992, p.28)”

This dissertation emerged from an in-depth analysis of two major fields of scholarship on African American Education: contemporary perspectives of African

American family-school relationships and historical narratives/counternarratives of African American experiences with segregation and desegregation. This postcritical ethnography intends to bridge these two bodies of research with an exploration of cross-generational familial (hi)stories. But more intimately, my own prior experiences as a white, first grade teacher in a *de facto* segregated school community furthered my belief that a deeper inquiry into the varied educational experiences of families of color must come from a strength based lens. To this end, this study explores the Copper and Jordan family stories to better understand the moves, choices, and messages that are shared across generations, which enabled them to navigate systems of inequality and institutionalized racism. As a white researcher working with African American participants, it is important to note that I do not see this study as a vehicle to amplify their otherwise silenced or powerless voices. I approach this project as an opportunity to engage with voices that are already enacting a family pedagogy of power and praxis with hopes of strengthening and texturizing our own understandings of African American educational experiences in a raced society. The stories shared in this dissertation reveal an intergenerational family pedagogy that speak against deficit theories prominent in studies on African American social mobility, historically segregated communities, and family involvement in education.

My understanding of intergenerational family pedagogy was inspired by Sherick Hughes' (2005; 2006) *Oppressed Family Pedagogy* as well as Maike Philipsen's (1999) concept of mothers and grandmothers as *dreamkeepers*, "who keep alive the dream that education is the harbinger of a better future"(p.37). Hughes (2005) defines *Oppressed Family Pedagogy*, informed by the critical pedagogies of Paulo Freire and Gloria Ladson Billings, as the "intergenerational art of critical and reciprocal teaching and learning that is

engaged by families battling oppression"(p.51). The families in Hughes' study embodied an Oppressed Family Pedagogy by first recognizing their struggle, then developing discursive strategies to combat the structures of power and oppression that operate in their communities. Through this oppressed family pedagogy families passed down messages of resiliency and positivity as well as strategies for accessing systems of support (2006).

Hughes' theorizing of Oppressed Family Pedagogy helped me understand the ways some families of color navigate the struggles of racism and educational inequality in their communities. However, when considering how oppressed family pedagogy applies to my participants in Parrish City , I did not feel comfortable framing and naming the families as oppressed. The Cooper and Jordan families occasionally alluded to their struggles and challenges, but explicitly did not want to focus their narratives on concepts of struggle nor did they identify as oppressed. While I understand that the society in which the families were navigating is fraught with unequal distribution of power and steeped in a history of institutionalized racism, the Coopers and Jordans did not emphasize their relationship to these structures in our interviews. As a white researcher aiming to understand the meanings the families ascribe to their lives through the narratives they shared, I find that it is more accurate to frame their approach as an *intergenerational family pedagogy*.

Similar to Hughes' emphasis on a pedagogy of hope, Philipsen (1999) in her book *Values-Spoken and Values-Lived*, illustrates the ways mothers and grandmothers maintain the memory of the strengths of their segregated community schools by encouraging their children to succeed, despite the challenges of contemporary schooling for African American youth. For the families in Philipsen's study, the elder generations maintained a sense of hope that a successful education was a path toward social mobility.

Building off of Hughes' and Philipsen's perspectives, intergenerational family pedagogy as demonstrated by the Cooper and Jordan families is moved by processes of hope and friction and contextualized by their memories of the past. While I initially approached this study as an exploration of family pedagogies, after a thorough analysis it became clear that their stories, and more specifically their intergenerational pedagogies, were tied up in narratives of mobility. Thus, in my analysis, I will elaborate on the concept of intergenerational family pedagogy through the theoretical framework of *Community Cultural Wealth* (Yosso, 2004). This lens provides a language to understand and articulate how the family stories speak to and against larger narratives of social and educational mobility.

Almost four hundred years after the first Africans involuntarily crossed the middle passage, five generations post abolition, and about two generations since the legal end to Jim Crow, African American communities continue to invest in their children a sense of hope and commitment to education as an avenue toward mobility and justice. The emerging narratives of movement in the families' lives spoke to the larger issues of social and educational mobility among African American families. After an extensive investigation of the research on social and educational mobility among African American communities, I found that the majority didn't fit the interpretive approach I intended for this study. The research either emphasized a deficit perspective of working class and low income communities or oversimplified the experiences of African Americans, thereby overlooking the complexities and socio-political contexts of their lived experiences. This exploration of the literature on mobility pushed me to reconsider how I may have

misunderstood my participants' mobility narratives and led me to reconceptualize my analysis.

This reconceptualization pushed me to pay closer attention to the meanings that the participants themselves ascribed to their experiences. For example, the first theme that emerged for me was the trope of *moving away*. It seemed that families used strategies to move away from their neighborhoods, communities, and schools in hopes for a better, safer place. However, after recognizing that much of the mobility literature focused on individuals *escaping* poverty, I realized that this notion of *escaping* did not fit my participants. In fact, although they sought better opportunities in their lives, their stories of their working class or sharecropping upbringings were largely positive, noting that "they weren't hurting for anything" and that they "didn't know that they were poor." This is not to say that they did not encounter struggle or institutionalized racism, or that there was in fact something that they were *moving away* from. However, for the purposes of this study, I recognize that I must attend to the meanings the participants make from their lived experiences, and this was just one example of having to push against my own analysis as I likewise push against the deficit perspectives of African American communities.

Much of the literature on African American mobility, primarily located in fields of economics, public policy, cultural psychology, and sociology focuses on the intergenerational transmission of status and emphasizes financial capital as a main indicator (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2002; Higginbotham & Weber 2002). I argue that many of these studies take too narrow a focus, failing to explore the relationship between families and the larger structures of power and privilege within which these families are situated. What is lost in these analyses are the everyday realities of African American

families, which reveal the complex relationships between families and the institutions they are navigating. There is a paucity of critical analyses exploring the experiences of working class and middle class African American families, particularly through a strength based lens. Many studies also largely focus on the negative effects of poverty on child development and families living in low income communities, suggesting middle class status as an *escape* from poverty (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2002). There is a difference between condemning the capitalistic and racialized *structures* that fuel systems of poverty, and critiquing the *experiences* of individuals living in poverty; it is the latter which leads to a cultural deprivation model of African American mobility.

Jarrett (1997) addresses the limitations of some studies that explore the prospects of mobility among families living in poverty. She argues that though there are important insights from many of these studies, they fail to capture the processes and experiences that enable certain children and families to become upwardly mobile despite the economic challenges they face. She highlights two major theories in the field of mobility that fail to effectively explore the phenomenon of children and families growing up in low income communities: neighborhood resource theory and collective socialization theory.

Neighborhood resource theory suggests that low income communities' limited resources may hinder children's healthy development. Similarly, collective socialization theory contends that low income communities' lack of middle class role models limits children's opportunities to learn the appropriate behaviors necessary for upward mobility. These two theories, which suggest low income communities are locations constrained by limited opportunities necessary for mobility, echo the common application of Bourdieu's notions of social reproduction and capital. For Bourdieu (1990), society is organized by a soci-

economic class system fraught with structural inequality and a false meritocracy, where certain forms of capital, valued over others, allow for the transmission of mobility through social classes. He describes three primary contributors to this theory: habitus, capital, and field. Habitus, a set of dispositions such as preferences in food, art, music, and general taste are learned experientially through childhood and into adulthood. These dispositions are directly related to the inheritable resources (capital) individuals utilize to navigate various settings and institutions (known as fields). Cultural capital can manifest in the objectified forms of books, instruments, and technology. It can also manifest in an embodied state, such as through knowledge, behavior, and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu goes on to include various forms of capital which yield economic and social profits depending on the field where they are applied:

Economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; ...cultural capital, which is convertible...into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and...social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible...into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of nobility. (1986 p.47)

Certain resources, behaviors, languages, networks, and dispositions are privileged over others by the dominant or elite groups in society, thereby reproducing structural inequality by allowing certain individuals and groups to maintain or increase their social positioning. This theory of capital helps to understand how society, families, and schools serve to reproduce structures of power and privilege by valuing certain forms of capital over others. While Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction and capital were developed to provide a language through which to analyze and critique the social structure of power in society which privileges certain groups while oppressing others, his theories have been

(mis)used to fuel cultural deprivation paradigms, particularly evident among studies of low income communities of color.

Lareau and Weininger (2003) provide a critique of the application of Bourdieu's theory of capital in educational research. While cultural capital is largely understood as "highbrow" dispositions and resources, they contend that Bourdieu himself provided a more adaptable and generic description. Lareau and Weininger suggest that cultural capital in educational research can be understood in broad terms as "specialized skills [that] are transmissible across generations, are subject to monopoly, and may yield advantages or profits" (p.598). Likewise, Farkas et al. (1990), described in a study of intergenerational mobility by Roksa and Potter (2011), suggest cultural capital plays out in the field of education where the standards of schools reward certain "skills, habits, and styles" (Farkas et al. 1990, p.27).

Lareau (2002)'s ethnographic work exploring the cultural capital activated through interactions with schools by white and Black working class and middle class families has been influential among scholars of educational research on family involvement and cultural capital. She defined two broad strategies of parenting. The first is concerted cultivation, prevalent among African American and white middle class families whose parenting style is characterized by involvement strategies typically valued by schools such as enrolling children in organized leisure activities, engaging in dialogue characterized by questioning and rationales, expressing a sense of entitlement, and comfort interacting in schools. In contrast, natural growth, a parenting style Lareau found prevalent among working class families, is characterized by providing less structured opportunities for development, strong kinship ties, and compliance. The experiences and dispositions

transmitted in these families create forms of cultural capital that, when activated, are either valued or disvalued by educational institutions.

These broader definitions of cultural capital have been applied to research examining the prospects of mobility among working class and middle class African Americans. Roksa and Potter's (2011) study suggest that the cultural capital conveyed by parenting styles is an important element of the transmission of upward mobility. However, their study consists of the limited understanding of parenting style, defined as participation in elite status cultural activities and concerted cultivation as defined by Laureau (2003), and does not elaborate on the processes working class families engage to provide opportunities for mobility and success for their children.

Recent qualitative studies, however, have explored more deeply the experiences of families who have been historically marginalized by schools and address the family's role in providing opportunities for mobility (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Bettie, 2002; Dominiguez & Watkins, 2003; Higginbothom & Weber, 1992; Yosso 2005). For example, Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) elaborate on Moll's (1992) work on Funds of Knowledge which they define as:

Families' social and labor history, household practices, division of labor, ideas about childrearing, and values about education...[that are] often bartered through social networks with other households, in essence becoming the currency for these exchanges, thus an important aspect of the household economy. (p. 164)

This theoretical analysis builds on Moll's original framework to connect funds of knowledge with theories of social and cultural capital. Rios-Aguilar et al.'s analysis provides a culturally responsive lens through which to understand the varied experiences

and approaches to educational involvement among families of color without neglecting the institutional barriers to the activation of such capital.

Tara Yosso (2005) incorporates a new framework to understanding the relationships and interactions between the funds of knowledge experienced among families of color and the institutions they are navigating. She theorizes *Community Cultural Wealth* as a response to the varied ways Bourdeiu's work on cultural capital has been applied to understanding communities of color and their experiences with education. Yosso's theory of Community Cultural Wealth, Moll et al.'s framework for funds of knowledge (1992) and Aguilar et al.'s (2011) integration of capital and funds of knowledge challenge the dominant perspective that families of color lack cultural capital. Yosso rejects the deficit premise and elaborate on the ways these funds are activated, translated, and valued by educational institutions.

In this study I will engage Yosso's theory of Community Cultural Wealth as a framework to examine the participants' narratives of social and educational mobility. Yosso defines culture as "behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people [as well as] material and nonmaterial productions of a people (p.75)." She goes on to define wealth as the total amount of individual's accumulated assets and resources. Thus, Yosso defines Community Cultural Wealth as, "An array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression (2005, p.77)." Informed by Critical Race Theory, particularly by its tenets of centering race and examining the strengths of communities of color, Yosso describes cultural wealth as containing the following forms of capital: 1) aspirational capital 2) familial capital 3) social capital 4) navigational capital 5)

resistant capital and 6) linguistic capital. In my analysis of the family stories I will use five of these forms of capital to understand the processes the Cooper and Jordan families undergo to navigate educational and social structures. Linguistic capital, defined as the multiple languages or language styles used in the home which contribute to intellectual development, is important in the lives of children and families of color. However, this form of capital was not a salient element of the narratives shared by the Cooper and Jordan families, hence, I have chosen to focus on the other five forms of capital in this analysis.

In this dissertation I view intergenerational family pedagogy as a conceptual umbrella to which the capital forms of community cultural wealth contribute. Using this framework, I will illustrate how the an intergenerational family pedagogy and the strengths of the segregated Black communities provided the necessary scaffolding for educational achievement and social mobility. Despite the well documented conditions of many Black segregated school communities (limited resources, unjust funding, and designation of separate and unequal) in this dissertation I will focus on the memories of segregation from the perspective of the Cooper and Jordan families. Contrary to the negative images often portraying the historically segregated communities, their stories remember their segregated schools and neighborhoods as locations of possibility and the spaces where their paths toward mobility took root.

Significance

This dissertation contributes to and speaks against several bodies of literature and educational policy. This dissertation *speaks against* : 1) the predominate research on African American families that positions them as largely uninvolved in education; 2) the master narrative of *de jure* segregated schools and communities as pathological and

inherently deficient; 3) research on African American upward mobility that fails to explore the complex socio-historical contexts of and meanings families ascribe to mobility; and 4) educational policy informed by the aforementioned research that often fails to consider the perspectives of families of color and their experiences navigating a raced educational system.

Shifting accountability away from policymakers, administrators, and teachers, school policies are placing increased emphasis on parents' role in the academic achievement of their children. Responding to the scholarship of educational researchers (Booth & Dunn, 1996; Epstein, 1985; 2001; Jeynes, 2005, among others), educational policies proposed over the past ten years, including No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2003) and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2010), underscore the importance of family involvement in education. In one provocative example in which educational policy defines acceptable forms of parental involvement, NCLB asked schools to require parents to monitor, “attendance, homework completion and television watching,” as well as “volunteering in their child’s classroom and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Consistent with the widely accepted definition addressed in the educational literature, these forms of parental involvement are those commonly attributed to white, middle class families (Auerbach, 2007; Nakagawa, 2000).

Teachers, administrators, politicians, and scholars continue to echo one another, emphasizing the importance of parent involvement in a child’s academic success. However, the predominate discourse among education policy and research frequently

focuses on the perceived under-involvement of many families of color, in particular Latino/a and African American families (Nakagawa, 2000). Moreover, research on family-school partnerships regularly addresses strategies to increase levels of involvement, but fails to provide a textured narrative of a community's relationship with schooling over time. These studies subtly position many African American communities as uninvolved, disadvantaged, or problematic. However, Gerardo Lopez (2001) urges scholars to move away from this deficit view of families of color toward reconceptualizing family involvement through a more culturally responsive lens. Lopez's study suggests that families who have been disenfranchised by the system of schooling may be involved with their children's education in ways that are not transparent to, or valued by, many educators.

Heeding Lopez's call, this dissertation will contribute to: 1) research exploring African American Families relationship to education as socially and historically situated and through a strength based lens; 2) the counternarratives of segregated education that reveal the strengths of these communities ;and 3) the critical studies on social mobility among communities of color where more complex understandings of cultural capital are explored. This dissertation brings a new perspective to the family involvement discourse by arguing that our understandings of family-school partnerships can be strengthened by analyzing families and their relationships to education as historically and contextually situated. Moreover, this study challenges the image of family in policy and practice, which is largely instrumental and ahistorical, by suggesting that families of color have deep histories which they bring to the instrumental demands of educational policy.

Dennis Tedlock (1990) suggests the metaphor of the palimpsest to describe the interpretive nature of our ethnographic work. The palimpsest was an ancient tablet used to

record local histories, events, and doctrines. The term palimpsest, from ancient Greek, means literally “to scrape again” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010). The writings on these tablets were scraped off so that new entries could be written, but remnants of the previous passages were evident in ghost-like layers. This metaphor may also eloquently describe how our family (hi)stories are aesthetically situated in our everyday lives. Drawing from the field of architectural archaeology, the palimpsest is a trope to capture the layers of history and iterations evident in any existing structure. Family stories are much like an old building, redesigned and translated for modernity and post-modernity. They provide sensual experiences of time and place, layered so deeply that it’s possible to not even notice how we are embodying the cultural, social, political, and personal histories of our lineages. This dissertation seeks to explore these palimpsest-like stories, not as specters of the past, but rather as breathing performances that inhale and exhale history.

Organization of Dissertation

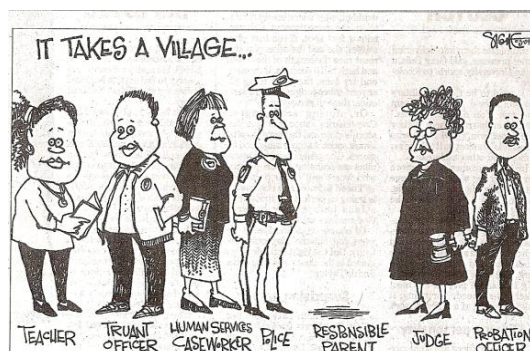
This dissertation moves from the larger theoretical and methodological contexts within which the family narratives are situated to a more intimate exploration of the stories shared by three generations of the Cooper and Jordan families. Chapter two, *Turning Toward the Literature*, examines both the research and policies to which the family narratives contribute as well as speak against. This chapter situates this dissertation in a larger conversation of race, education, and mobility among families of color. Chapter three, *Moving Other People's Stories*, provides a discussion on the methodological approach of postcritical ethnography as it is informed by theories of narrative performativity. This chapter also establishes the tensions of my positionality, provides a brief context of Parrish City as the location for the study, and introduces the participants.

The fourth and fifth chapters are representations of the Jordan and Cooper family stories, respectively. These chapters re-perform the stories that were shared with me in the participants' own words, organized by the following themes of Intergenerational Family Pedagogy and mobility: *moving toward, staying away, staying together, representation, education, and intergenerational investment*. Chapter six, *Becoming Through Mobility*, explores the meanings performed in the Cooper and Jordan family narratives. In this chapter, I first unpack the family stories through a thematic analysis of the aforementioned themes of social and educational mobility. Next, I use Yosso's theoretical framework of Community Cultural Wealth to address the various forms of cultural capital activated through an intergenerational family pedagogy. I conclude this dissertation in chapter seven, *Moving On*, by proposing the contradictions and complications of my positionality and theorizing my whiteness as well as my role as a participating actor in the construction of the family narratives. Next, I will revisit the literature discussed in chapter two and address how the Cooper and Jordan family stories complicate the narratives and counternarratives of desegregation and family involvement in education. Finally, in the spirit of the Cooper and Jordan family pedagogies of hope and intergenerational investment, I suggest the directions and possibilities of future research, practice, and policy addressing families of color and their relationship to education.

CHAPTER TWO

Turning Toward the Literature: Speaking to and Against Discourses on Race and Education

Figure 1. It Takes A Village



News and Observer (2005)

It was 11:30 in the morning when I walked down the hall and into a small, windowless room. I was surrounded by four walls of white cinderblock, a refrigerator, sink, and bathroom, all exclusively reserved for teachers. The air was saturated with the smell of melting plastic from the laminating machine. I sat down and began to unpack my lunch; with only 15 minutes to eat I had to be quick. As I inhaled my peanut butter and jelly sandwich I looked down and noticed a cartoon (above) from the daily newspaper laid out in the middle of the table with a yellow post-it note beside it that read, "So true!" I took the newspaper clipping, folded it, and slipped it into my pocket.

I came across the above cartoon during my second year of teaching at a *de facto* segregated elementary school in a predominantly African American and Latino/a community. Its placement in the teacher's lounge is a disturbing example of how the culture of schools and popular media reinforce the image of certain parents as uninvolved or unconcerned with education. It also reflects the growing assumption of the families' responsibility in the educational achievement of their children. In order to better understand the relationship between many African American families and education, I

found it necessary to explore the literature on the historical perspectives of African American education, spanning Jim Crow through contemporary society. The majority of research addressing African American family-school relationships neglect to engage these historical contexts or the strengths of communities of color, a gap to which this dissertation speaks.

In this dissertation, I will engage the Cooper and Jordan family stories as they speak to and against educational research and policy. In this chapter I will provide a review of the discourses that the stories speak against as well as those to which the stories contribute. A more thorough analysis of how these stories respond to these discourses will be addressed in Chapter Six. This discussion will be divided into two broad thematic sections: narratives and counternarratives of segregation and desegregation and narratives and counternarratives of family involvement in education.

It's important to note that the Cooper and Family stories exemplify the patterns and nuances of Black family life in a raced society. Their stories are unique but also at times representative of experiences other families face while navigating their community, educational, and social systems for the benefit of future generations. It's important to recognize that the family narratives are not always clearly delineated into either the counter or master discourses. Rather, at times they respond to and offer critiques of both. While noting that the counter and master narrative dichotomy is not always representative of the Cooper and Jordan family experiences, the following analytical review reflects my process of inquiry into the discourses from which I came to understand the family stories.

The section to follow will address the dominant views of *de jure* segregated school communities in effort to elucidate the roots of the contemporary tensions between public

schooling and families of color. It is important to turn our gaze backward, to the middle of the last century, to better understand how racism permeated not only our systems of education, but the policies ostensibly aimed to reform them.

Segregated and Desegregated Schooling and Education

Master Narratives of Segregated School

They would not call it slavery, but some other name. Slavery has been fruitful in giving herself names...and it will call itself by yet another name; and you and I and all of us had better wait and see what new form this old monster will assume, in what new skin this old snake will come forth. (Douglass, 1865)

Today education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments.... It is the very foundation of good citizenship. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he [sic] is denied opportunity of education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. We come, then, to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe it does. (Brown v Board Decision, 1954)

An understanding of the master narrative of segregated African American communities is best framed by the supreme court decision that resulted in dismantling them, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The *Brown* decision to end *de jure* segregation and make public schools the theatre of operation for one of the largest battles against racial injustice in American history strongly reflected the dominant and deficit views of segregated communities of color of the time.

Evident in the excerpt from the *Brown* decision above, desegregation of public schools was based on the belief that education is "the foundation of good citizenship" and necessary for any child to succeed in society. It was believed that segregated Black schools were inherently unequal and could not provide the foundation for good citizenship that

white schools offered. Beyond discrepancies in tangible resources, segregated Black schools were portrayed by white politicians, lawmakers, and researchers as culturally bankrupt and unable to provide the necessary opportunities for children to succeed (Morris, 2008). The language of *Brown* provides insight into the dominant views of schooling and the deleterious outcomes of many desegregated schools:

Today it [education] is the principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him adjust normally to his environment... To separate them (Black children) from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone ... A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of the law therefore has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children... (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954)

The logic of *Brown* emphasized the deleterious effects of segregation on African American education: “A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of the law therefore has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children” (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). While recognizing the psychological effects of “inferiority” on African American children, this statement assumes that the experiences in segregated Black schools solely reinforce inferiority, lack of motivation, and cultural deprivation. Although *Brown* aimed to overturn a long held and unjust policy of separate but equal, the arguments put forth during *Brown* reinforced deficit perspectives of African American communities and focused on segregation rather than racism as the root of inequality. Expert witness in the *Brown* trial, Phillip E. Heman, explained, “...[S]egregation has a detrimental effect on colored children; it affects their motivation to learn, and it has a tendency to retard their educational and mental development and to deprive them of benefits they would receive in

an integrated system " (Green, 2004, p. 272). Ellman's statement alludes to the notion that *only* Black students experience the detrimental effects caused by segregation. Atkinson (1993) claims that the *Brown* decision implied that Black children were inferior and dependent upon the presence of whites for social and intellectual development. Additionally, Ellman's statement above suggests that the Black schools were substandard and did not motivate children to learn.

Common depictions of Black community schools emphasized substandard education, highlighted by dilapidated facilities, lack of transportation, high teacher-student ratios, poor attendance, poor behavior, and overcrowding (Siddle Walker, 2000). It is well documented that many segregated schools experienced unequal distribution of resources and funding. Major discrepancies in per pupil spending in many Southern states revealed just how dramatic the unequal distributions of funding were. For example, in Mississippi during the 1940's, 2,120 one room and one teacher school houses existed of which 95% served Black students (Clotfelter, 2004). Likewise, major incongruities in school equipment, building quality, and class sizes were evident in North Carolina public schools as well as in other Southern states (Clotfelter, 2004; Siddle Walker 1996).

The majoritarian view of segregated schools focused on the lack of resources while neglecting to address the strengths and possibilities of these schools in spite of the unequal distribution of funding. These portrayals of African American teachers, students, and families share a single story of segregated community schools and fail to explore the dedication to education and apprehension to integration prevalent among many community members. However, these deficit portraits are contradicted by recent accounts by scholars

who have investigated the quality of segregated Black schools, uncovering a revisionist history that engages memories of strength, racial uplift, and intellect.

Counternarratives of Segregated Education and Desegregation

All our teachers at Booker-T Washington were black women. They were committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become scholars, thinkers and cultural workers--black folks who used our 'minds.' We learned early that our devotion to learning, to a life of the mind, was a counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization. Though they did not define or articulate in theoretical terms, my teachers were enacting a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was profoundly anti-colonial (hooks, 1994 pp. 2-3).

In the excerpt above from her book *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), bell hooks affectionately recalls her experiences in a segregated Black school prior to desegregation. This section will explore the counternarratives to the deficit portrayals of Black community schools through a discussion of two themes: memories of segregated schools and African American perspectives on desegregation.

memories of segregated schools.

Despite the image of segregated Black schools as pathological and segregated Black communities as culturally deprived, the following narratives counter the dominant views that contributed to the *Brown* decision and its aftermath. Many critical scholars have participated in a revisionist history of Black community schools by providing analyses of oral histories and ethnographic studies on segregated schools prior to desegregation. Thomas Sowell (1972; 1976) helped to shape the early counternarratives of segregated schools. His studies of *Black Excellence* among segregated Black community high schools and elementary schools recounted memories of the schools as places of rigorous and high standards as well as nurturing support.

In another influential counternarrative, Vanessa Siddle Walker's (1996)

ethnographic study interrogates the memories of a segregated Black school community in the Jim Crow South. The oral histories reveal a profound dedication among families and teachers to provide a rich education for their children. The findings of Siddle Walker's case study of the Caswell County Training School (CCTS), which revealed a strong communal support for education, were not anomalous. The goals were to "uplift the Negro race" and develop citizens with "high degree of character" (Siddle Walker, 1996 p. 26). Black parents and other community members contributed labor, materials, transportation, and finances to develop CCTS in Siddle Walker's study. But the development of this school took decades and required advocacy and agency among the Black community. Community members frequently had to battle the local school board, advocating for resources that were often denied. With limited financial capital, but rich in cultural capital, Black families strived for educational opportunities that were not afforded to them as slaves or descendants of slaves. Resisting the status quo of poor educational facilities and lack of curricular resources, CCTS hired teachers with bachelors or graduate degrees and worked with the community to develop extra-curricular activities and a curriculum that blended the state mandated industrial courses with classical philosophies of education. Many teachers, although not all, incorporated ideas of Black self-reliance.

Teachers and administrators worked hand-in-hand echoing the social and cultural values of their communities, often living in the same neighborhoods as their students (Siddle Walker, 1993). These educators were frequently the foundation of Black resistance and advocacy movements. Consistent with DuBois' ideological views of education, the teachers supported their students' academic achievement while instilling a strong cultural knowledge and preparing them to survive in an oppressive society.

Other studies have revealed similar suggestions, highlighting Black schools as a “pillar of strength” and hope among the Black community (Kelly, 2010; Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995; Morris, 1999; Noblit & Dempsey 1993). These schools were remembered as institutions deeply enmeshed within the community, dependent on families and community members for economic, social, and political support (Noblit & Dempsey, 1993; Siddle Walker, 1996).

Noblit and Dempsey (1996) share recollections of the stature teachers held: "There was prestige. My parents thought preachers were good, but teachers were great" (p.123). A former principal in this study also reflected on the expectations among teachers in the segregated community school, "They wanted their kids to have an understanding of their culture and history, and what they were doing...what they were needing to do" (p.124). Teachers in these segregated community schools were not only postured by prestige, but were also active members of the community, organizing and advocating for better quality schools and resources (Siddle Walker, 2005). Siddle Walker's study of the organizing tradition and resistance among Black educators in Georgia between the years 1878-1938 provided a deeper look at Black teachers as change agents working against structural conditions and policies that attempted to limit the educational opportunities of children of color. This study sheds light on the political lives of Black teachers in the Jim Crow South, suggesting that Black teachers were, in fact, the drivers of the civil rights movement, propelling the resistance forward through tactical organizing and action (Siddle Walker, 2005).

In the 1960's, Freedom Schools of Mississippi emerged from the organizing work of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) to provide students with a

curriculum that specifically focused on racial uplift, counternarratives, and strategies for socio-political action (Payne, 1995). Septima Clark and Ella Baker were two of the many influential educators who developed the *citizenship curriculum* for these schools (Payne, 1995). Freedom Schools were designed not solely for the benefit of education and achievement, but for communal and political solidarity. Unlike CCTS which offered a rich and diverse curriculum, many schools in Mississippi lacked subjects such as foreign language, drama, art, and advanced mathematics (Payne, 1995). In order to provide their communities with comparable experiences to whites, the Freedom Schools incorporated these disciplines into their social justice oriented curriculum. The citizenship curriculum of the Freedom Schools was ideologically related to DuBois' beliefs of Black self reliance, racial uplift and social reconstruction.

The aforementioned studies support the notion that education rather than schooling often comprised the curriculum and pedagogy of the segregated community classrooms. Fairclough (2000) argues, "[B]lack teachers tilled the soil and planted the seeds of what eventually became a full blown revolt against segregation and discrimination: the civil rights movement" (pp. 67-68). Deep understandings of Black epistemologies and historical perspectives provided fertile opportunity for meaningful education to occur.

perspectives on desegregation.

Given these memories of segregated schools, it seems logical to assume that many Black families, teachers, and administrators would have resisted or at least been skeptical of integration. However, the predominant literature on desegregation highlights resistance to integration solely among the white community. While some Black ideological perspectives of education were aligned with *Brown's* aim of integration, others remained

skeptical, acknowledging the pervasiveness of racism and questioning the panacean quality of integration in a white supremacist society. Many Black activists, including the NAACP, were strong advocates for integration, however, DuBois among other Black activists, educators, and community members expressed apprehension over the movement to desegregate (Faltz & Leake, 1996; Siddle Walker, 1996). For many Black families it was not integration nor segregation that they sought, but a quality education (Faltz and Leake, 1996; Morris 2008). This sentiment echoes DuBois message that is as relevant today as ever:

Theoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he [sic] needs is an education. What he must remember is that there is no magic, either in mixed schools or segregated schools. A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers, with hostile public opinion, and no teaching of truth concerning black folk, is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries...is equally bad. Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader more natural basis for education of all youth...But other things seldom are equal, and in that case Sympathy, Knowledge, and the Truth outweigh all that mixed school can offer. (1935, p.335)

W.E.B. DuBois, among others, prophetically anticipated that the consequences of desegregation would lead to the dismantling of the Black schools and therefore alter the curriculum for Black children, including the elimination of Black history and the freedom struggles (Faltz & Leake, 1994). One example of a school community's resistance to desegregation is David Cecelski's (1994) study of a Black school community in Hyde County, North Carolina. Recognizing the history and strengths of their community schools, members of the Black community collectively resisted and boycotted the school board's plan to integrate. This resistance was fueled by the Black community's critique of the district's approach to desegregation. The racist subtext of the school board's approach to

integration and the burden it placed on Black children, teachers, and leaders did not go unnoticed and unchallenged by the Black community of Hyde County (Cecelski, 1994).

The counternarratives of the segregated Black schools are important since they challenge the dominant cultural deprivation and deficit models of Black families, teachers, and schools prior to *Brown*. Moreover, they reveal a strong sense of agency among Black communities whose critique of integration foreshadowed the tenets of Critical Race Theory that were raised decades later. Many families, teachers, and community members anticipated the challenges that desegregation would bring and the negative impact it would have on their communities long before Critical Legal and Race scholars articulated their critique of the legal proceedings and aftermath of *Brown*. This dissertation revisits memories of segregated schooling and education, not only for what those memories tell us about the desegregation era but also what they tell us about contemporary schooling and education. Thus, I will close this section with a brief discussion of the consequences of *Brown*. For a more thorough analysis of desegregation see (Atkinson, 1993; Bell, 2005; Irving & Irvine, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Morris, 2008).

Frederick Douglass' statement, shared at the beginning of this section, hauntingly anticipates the pervasiveness of racism in our society that maintains its power through shape-shifting social reform: "...[Y]ou and I and all of us had better wait and see what new form this old monster will assume, in what new skin this old snake will come forth." Critical Legal and Race Studies pioneer Derrick Bell (2004), theorizing of the *permanence of racism* echoes Douglass' caution above. Racism is a permanent fabric of our society, inherent in the paradoxical nature of our nation's political system that values both democracy and capitalism. Eradicating racism and oppression would involve reconciling

that paradox and moving away from a system that perpetuates white supremacy. He contends that the racism that allowed slavery, Jim Crow, and other forms of racial oppression to exist continues to thrive in insidious forms. *Permanence of racism* refers to racism as “normal science,” the way society typically operates. It is “the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001 p. 7). This perspective elaborates Heidegger’s discussion of *the everyday*, which provides a method of understanding the human experience as patterned behaviors and motivations “grounded in social processes and framed by historical moments” (Holt, 1995 p. 9). Holt argues that through *everydayness*, race and the marking of the Other is reproduced, “long after its original historical stimulus-the slave trade and slavery-have faded. It is at this level that seemingly rational and ordinary folk commit irrational and extraordinary acts” (p.7).

From *Brown*’s claim that segregation leads to a sense of inferiority, politicians and integration advocates inferred erroneously that integration would lead to a panacea for racism. This summation did not consider the permanence of racism that would persist as Black community schools were dismantled. Noblit and Dempsey (1996), referencing the work of Irvine & Irvine (1983), liken the unanticipated consequences of desegregation to that of *iatrogenesis*, the notion that the cure is worse than the disease. Likewise, the model of assimilation that proclaimed it was in African Americans' best interests to absorb the epistemologies, language, and behavioral patterns of the dominant class did not address the violence of subtractive assimilation on the individual and collective African American psyche. As articulated in Shujaa’s (1994) theory of schooling and education described earlier, the consequences of desegregation moved Black students from the all Black

schools where many were being *educated* to mixed schools and *de facto* segregated schools where they were, and continue to be, *schooled*.

As Bell's theory on the permanence of racism contends, racism would prevail despite what appeared to be gains in the justice system. White resistance to *Brown* was strong across the nation, but was particularly potent in the south. Resistance came in the form of state court decisions as well as political leaders and school districts refusing to initiate desegregation, due in large part to the ambiguous language of *Brown II*: *with all deliberate speed* (Ladson Billings; Bell; Clotfelter, 2004; Green, 2004). In one jarring editorial in the Mississippi Daily News, published the day after the *Brown* decision was announced, the author framed desegregation in a violent, near apocalyptic fashion:

Human blood may stain Southern soil in many places because of this decision but the dark red stains of that blood will be on the marble steps of the United States Supreme Court building. White and Negro children in the same schools will lead to miscegenation. Miscegenation leads to mixed marriages and mixed marriages lead to the mongrelization of the human race. (Daily News of Mississippi, 1954)

Resistance also came in the form of the *white flight*. According to *Brown II*, schools were to desegregate with *all deliberate speed*; however this Supreme Court decision did not effectively take into consideration the grave reality of a backlash. Clotfelter (2004) writes: "Hence, the execution of the policy of desegregation was frustrated, and ultimately blunted, by four factors: apparent white aversion to interracial contact, the multiplicity of means by which whites could sidestep the effects of the policy, the willingness of state and local governments to accommodate white resistance, and the faltering resolve of the prime movers of the policy" (p.8).

All four of these factors contributed to another form of resistance, a snake in new skin: school choice. Many southern states enacted a *freedom of choice* model of school

reform around the mid twentieth century. Southern districts felt confident that many families of color could not or would not opt to move their children to predominantly white schools, thereby keeping a *de facto* Jim Crow schooling intact. Sherick Hughes (2005) study revealed the ways some African American families in North Carolina engaged in an *Oppressed Family Pedagogy* to counteract the freedom of choice programs that attempted to limit their educational opportunities. Hughes' study addresses ways the freedom of choice plan was designed by discursive innovation, the reification and reshaping of words to suggest a new and important policy change. Although Freedom of Choice programs were ruled unconstitutional, contemporary school reform programs continue to use school choice as a means of educational opportunity, but are often limiting to many families in low income communities to whom the realities of choice are not a viable option.

In addition to freedom of choice, the increase of private school enrollment in the south, post *Brown*, revealed another method of resistance and maintenance of segregated schools. Although the reasons families turn to private schools are often complex, Clotfelter's (2004) analysis in his text, *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Segregation*, revealed a rise of non denominational private school enrollment among white families as implementation of integration was initiated. While segregation within and between schools remains continues to thrive among public schools today, almost sixty years after *Brown*, many African American families are engaging in educational control and choosing to remove their children from a system of public *schooling*, in search of a place of *education*.

Shujaa (1993) proposes a model that moves beyond engaging educational reform by exploring the possibilities of creating a new social order. In this new social order where

schools are no longer institutions of white privilege and supremacy, African Americans must assume control over their educational decisions and seek out places of *education*, such as homeschooling or independent schools. With these moves, their quality of life and educational achievements must match their high expectations while paired with a critique of the oppressive structural conditions which impose barriers to educational opportunity. Shujaa posits that only when parents choose an education that does not reinforce existing power relations nor the dominant European-American ways of knowing, can a new social order ensue. However, he notes that many African American families choose to place their children in independent and private schools for a variety of reasons. Often families choose alternative schooling options that can provide better opportunities for their children, but their choices do not always explicitly refer to society's structural conditions of privilege and oppression. Oftentimes an African American family's choice to resist public schooling is focused on providing an alternative avenue to access the privileges of the existing power relations(Shujaa, 1993).

Based on the aforementioned critique of the Brown decision, it is clear that desegregation alone was not capable of eliminating racism or redistributing power and resources. Because of the *permanence of racism* in our society, the promise of Brown seems unfulfilled. Despite the good intentions of the *Brown* decision, the roadmap to integration was flawed. This analysis has shown that the way our society implemented desegregation resulted in the breakdown of the Black community schools, which were the cornerstone of Black solidarity and education. Contemporarily, *de facto* segregated schools are on the rise in many states and unequal distribution of school resources remains problematic (Clotfelter, 2004; Kozol, 1991). Scholars continue to search to understand

why so many African American youth are alienated by public schools. While some hypotheses attempt to link this alienation to either a cultural mismatch between schools and students or to more widespread social and economic inequalities, our understanding of African American experiences in schools post *Brown* continues to evolve (Foster, 1994 In Sujaah).

As bell hooks (1994) recognized as a child, the *Brown* decision did not bring about the educational opportunities anticipated.

When we entered racist, desegregated, white schools we left a world where teachers believed that black children rightly would require political commitment. Now we were mainly taught by white teachers whose lessons reinforced racist stereotypes. For Black children, education was no longer about the practice of freedom. Realizing this, I lost my love of school. (p. 3)

With the abrupt removal of Black teachers and leaders, the strong potential for positive educational experience was lost. African American teachers and administrators held extremely high expectations for their students and served as “indispensable role models” (Green, 2004 p.276). This loss may account, at least partially, for the decline in achievement among Black students. Desegregation may have negatively impacted students self esteem by placing students in environments fraught with discrimination and unfamiliar curricula (Clotfelter, 2004). With the removal of the Black educators and schools, Black families were disconnected from the Euro-centric schools their children now attended. A shared commitment of resilience, collaboration, and collective struggle was now diminished by the breakdown of this community. In desegregated schools, Black families often contended with dialect and cultural barriers, segregation within schools (such as tracking), and teachers’ low expectations of students (Fields Smith, 2005).

Counternarratives and Nostalgia.

According to Barbara Shircliffe (2001), our memories are not only shaped by our past experiences, but also by the consequences of those experiences, subsequent events, and contemporary state of affairs. The stories we share perform social, historical, and political identities that may act as “artful critique” of the status quo. Just as a performative understanding of history resists objectivity and singular truths, stories embedded in oral accounts may perform commentaries on the past, present, and future. Shircliffe (2001) explores the role of nostalgia in counter narratives of segregated schooling among African Americans. She writes:

...the study of nostalgia, literally defined as “homesickness”— a yearning for something past that is no longer recoverable— allows historians to explore how individuals invest past experiences with meaning and use historical memory as a starting point for social commentary. Through nostalgia we can invest past events and experiences with significance largely informed by our present concerns. Our nostalgia for the past in a sense is an informal way we comment and make sense of history, revealing our responses to and desires for social change (p. 62).

While I appreciate this description of nostalgia as a way to understand how our memories may speak directly to a critique of the status quo, Shircliffe critique of nostalgia is problematic. Her study crosschecks African American memories of their segregated school community against more *objective* historical archives to indicate which and how memories may be shaped by nostalgia. Hilton Kelley’s (2010) work on the collective memories and hidden transcripts of teachers of the Jim Crow south provides an alternative perspective on memory and nostalgia. He writes: “Framing positive memories of legally segregated schooling as only nostalgia undermines the integrity of former students and teachers who have the capacity to remember their past as they lived it....”(p.11).

Kelly's premise has prompted me to question why only the counter narratives of segregated schools are labeled as romanticized or nostalgic, as if the dominant collective memory was *[T]ruly* the way it was. While various perspectives and memories of segregation and desegregation exist, it seems that only those that portray the strengths of the segregated Black community are examined for nostalgic influences. Drawing from the work of Kelly, I approach this dissertation of family histories with the following understandings: 1) memories do not need be based on direct experience, they can be developed vicariously through other's memories or texts; 2) memories are embodied and acted upon, not static objects and; 3) there exist a variety of perspectives and memories of the past and no single one should hold authority over another.

In the following section I will address the ways African American families have been involved in their children's education, both before and after *Brown*. As this review will demonstrate and despite the negative consequences of persistent structural racism, Black families continue to strive for educational success and opportunity, challenging and exploding the barriers to African American mobility that institutionalized racism has attempted to etch in stone.

African American Family Involvement in Education

Family Involvement in Education as Whitestream Discourse

The discourse of family involvement in education performs a *whitestream* perspective of the relationships between families and education. This is particularly problematic when this perspective infiltrates the interpretations of families of color and their experiences with education and schooling. Whitestream, building of notions of *mainstream and malestream*, can be defined as the idea that American society is largely

structured by the power and privileges of the dominant European-American experiences (Denis, 1997; Grande, 2005). Drawing to the surface how our discourses and actions are raced, in this section I will describe the literature and policies of family involvement that perpetuate whiteness as the norm.

A preponderance of literature on family structures, academic achievement, and family involvement assumes a deficit perspective of families of color (Peters, 1997; Few, 2007; Jones, 2007; Dechenes et al, 2003; Nakagawa, 2000; Lopez, 2001). Many studies argue that parental involvement has strong implications for student's achievement in schools (Jeynes, 2003). However, they are consistently defining family involvement as school and home based in ways that reinforce white middle class values. Therefore, it is not just any form of involvement that is perceived to support achievement in schooling, but rather the specific forms of school valued involvement. Families who are involved with their children's education in alternative forms are often viewed as uninvolved and uncaring since they are not perceived as offering acceptable forms of capital. In various studies, their homes are seen as places of instability, limited learning, and non- intellectual experiences. For example, a study by Lee and Burkam (2002) and another by Magnuson et al. (2004) on social background and school readiness examined the family activities of what they term "disadvantaged" minority families. They determined that Black and Latino/a children have limited exposure to literacy based and cognitive activities outside of school. The authors described the home environments of these "disadvantaged" families as lacking "stimulating learning opportunities" (Magnuson et al., 2004.p.118). However, these studies are limited by their scope of what constitutes literacy and cognitive activities, confining these categories to white-European and middle class perspectives.

By reviewing the legislation and trends in school policies, it is evident that educators are increasingly placing high value on the role of parents in their child's education (Trotman, 2001). Shifting the burden of accountability off the shoulders of teachers and administrators, school policies reveal an ever-increasing parental responsibility to ensure the academic achievement of their children. Responding to the widely read research on parent involvement in education, in particular Joyce Epstein who has published extensively on the effects of parent involvement on children's education (1985; 1987; 2001), policy makers have included parent involvement as key elements of school reform programs. In 2000, the Department of Education's National Education Goals specified as its eighth goal: "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (Nakagawa, 2000, p.444). Likewise, the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, proposed by the Bush administration, required schools to develop a compact with parents that ensured their commitment to supporting their child's education:

Such compacts shall...describe the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering in their child's classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time...(U.S. Department of Education, 2003)

And more recently, the Obama administration's Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2010), continued to echo the same value of family involvement, although its comprehensive family and community engagement plan did not outline specific demands on parents as did NCLB. Of the importance of family involvement, Obama writes, "There is no program and no policy that can substitute for a parent who is involved in their child's education from day one (U.S. Department of

Education, 2010)." This broader statement emphasizes the significance of parent or family involvement in education, but hesitates to define such involvement.

These aims proposed by scholars and policy makers largely assume a standard definition of family involvement that places specific demands on parents and families with regard to their child's academic achievement. Even President Obama's statement failed to broaden the conception involvement to that of the *family* rather than solely the *parent*. This definition of involvement held by many teachers and administrators, as well as many middle class European-American families, reveals various assumptions. It assumes that mother and father are the main caretakers (hence the nomenclature, *parent* involvement) and that involvement in their child's education can take three forms: school based support (assisting in the classroom or involvement in school programs), home-based involvement (assisting with homework and other academic activities), and participation in school planning and management teams (PTA) (Epstein, 1987; Green et al, 2007; Hoover Dempsey, 1995; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Weissberg et al. 1999). Whiteman definitions of family and home implicitly shape the expectations of family-school relationships that are prominent in the discourse on education and schooling (Nakagawa, 2000). The ideal caregiver is viewed as a white, middle class, biological mother whose pedagogical relationship with her child mirrors the dominant values of school and society at large (Jones, 2007). These values include using authoritative and responsive behavior management, providing opportunities for reading and writing at home, completing homework together, and engaging in dialogue that encourages rational decision making and a sense of entitlement (Jones, 2007; Laureau, 2003). Jones (2007) explains:

The hypothetical white, middle-class woman has been constructed as the ideal mother who turns work into play, disciplines using nurturing strategies of

progressive childrearing, interacts with her child through ongoing negotiations of relations and rules, and uses social networks to ensure her child's success in schools and in society: in other words, parent-child interactions that are similar in many ways to the interactions of progressive educators and young children. (p.165)

The distinction between the home and school that has been structured by our modern system of schooling, creates a challenge to the politically charged movement for family involvement in education. In particular, families who do not fit the dominant paradigm of a “good” family may experience a double jeopardy—navigating the gendered tensions between family and school as well as the tensions between school and minority family. The way family and home are defined and positioned in the literature and policies shape the expectations of family-school relationships that are prominent in the discourse on education and schooling (Nakagawa, 2000). The ideal caregiver is viewed as a white, middle class, biological mother whose pedagogical relationship with her child mirrors the dominant values of school and society at large (Jones, 2007). These values include using authoritative and responsive behavior management, providing opportunities for reading and writing at home, completing homework together, and engaging in dialogue that encourages rational decision making and a sense of entitlement (Jones, 2007; Lareau, 2003).

Moreover, Annette Lareau's (2003) study on social class and family life found that expert (educators, psychologists, policy makers) opinions on effective parenting reflected white, middle class values, which also echoed the teaching practices in schools. Building off Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, Lareau further suggests that families whose educational and social values reflect those of the classroom are more likely to be successfully included and involved in their child's school (Lareau, 1987). Conversely,

families who do not fit the dominant view of ideal parent, such as families of color or from working class backgrounds, are often marginalized by the school. Many of these families are perceived by educators as uncaring or uninvolved in their child's education (Lopez, 2001).

These perspectives have reinforced a monochromatic understanding of families' role in the education thereby *othering* families of color and marginalizing their efforts and experiences. The process of *othering* acts as a means to reproduce systems of inequality by marking difference as a deficit (Barter-Gotfrey & Taket In Taket, 2009). The ways that some African American families support their children's education is invisible to many teachers, administrators, and researchers and therefore is often misunderstood and undervalued. Despite the prevalence of research on minority families and their involvement in education, most of these studies have not sufficiently investigated the nuanced ways that marginalized families support their children's education (Lopez, 2001). Research on minority family involvement largely consists of quantitative evaluations of the level and perceptions of involvement among parents and teachers or suggestions for improvement. These analyses are frequently constrained by a white-European understanding of families and their role in education.

However, recent studies have criticized the traditional models of parent involvement for their neglect to include broader and culturally responsive definitions (Quiocho and Daoud, 2006; Lopez, 2001; Auerbach 2007; Orellana 2001; Delgado-Gaitan 1991; Lareau & Horvat 1999). One study that has been particularly influential in the development of this proposal is Gerardo Lopez's (2001) ethnographic study of Mexican American migrant families. His research explored the unique ways one particular family

supported their children's education. Lopez's study showed that historically disenfranchised families are often involved with their children's education in ways that are not transparent to or valued by many educators. This dissertation heeds Lopez's call for scholars to explore the ways families of color are *already* involved in their child's education.

Though schools might have us forget this, curriculum is first experienced in the private sphere of home (Grumet, 1993):

The content and structure of domestic life are our first curriculum... The hand that caresses us and then points out the world worthy of our notice is drawing content out of the buzzing confusion to bring to our notice. Days that are punctuated with meals, nap time, story time, play time, weeks that include trips to the store, washing dishes, sweeping floors, putting out garbage, and bringing home the paper provide the first structure and sequence for all of us. (p.206)

More than just sequence and structure, parents represent and resymbolize their world, epistemologies, and beliefs through a domestic curriculum that is the child's first classroom. By understanding curriculum as something that can occur in the home between family members, our conceptualization of education can transcend the limitations of the classroom walls and standard definitions of involvement.

African American Family Involvement Before and after Brown

In this section I will discuss the ways Black communities have historically struggled for the education of their children. By engaging the historiographic as well as contemporary educational literature on Black family involvement, a richer and more textured understanding develops. Drawing from Shujaa's (1994) theory of schooling vs. education as discussed earlier, this analysis of the literature will suggest that while education may not be prevalent in schools, it may seek refuge within the curriculum of the home. The following examples highlight research that examines African American

involvement in education through a strengths-based lens and takes into consideration historical, political, and structural contexts of power and privilege. These studies reveal African American involvement through counter-storytelling, oppressed family pedagogy, strong familial and community bonds, and a historic dedication to educational achievement. However, it's important to keep in mind that Black families are not a universal category. Sherick Hughes (2007) in his ethnographic study on Oppressed Family Pedagogy, cautions the reader by using the language of *nuanced* Black families. He urges researchers and readers to approach their interpretations of Black families as unique and individualized, each with their own nuanced behaviors, beliefs, and experiences. I am mindful of Hughes' suggestion in the review of literature that follows.

dedication to education.

Black families in the United States have been struggling for a strong and equitable education since their enslavement (Anderson, date; Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995; DuBois date). W.E.B Du Bois (1998) speaks to the Black drive for education after emancipation:

The eagerness to learn among the American Negroes was exceptional in the case of a poor and recently emancipated folk...The very feeling of inferiority which slavery forced upon them fathered an intense desire to rise out of their condition by means of education (p.638)

Historical research has revealed that Black families have sought education as a tool for social mobility and liberation; however, not all agreed on the same educational values, curriculum, and avenues to liberation (Anderson, 1988; Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995). While some families advocated for assimilation, others suggested a more radical approach that drew from Afrocentric epistemologies and critiques of white supremacy (Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995). Despite these differing approaches to education, it can be

generalized that most freed slaves and the generations that followed valued education as a means to freedom, success, and mobility.

Siddle Walker's (1996) ethnographic study revealed a profound dedication among families in segregated communities to provide a rich education for their children. Families contributed labor, economic, and social resources to the school community. Siddle Walker (2000) defined two categories of parent involvement common during segregation: parents as patrons and parents as advocates. The most common form of involvement was patronage. Parents would often buy supplies and school equipment or donate their time and labor to support the school, such as to plant gardens to beautify the school landscape. Since many schools were denied resources, this was a critical element of parent involvement. The second form of familial support was the parent's role as an advocate. Many family members acted as mediators between the school community and the White school board. These parents pressured local and state officials for better resources, safer school buildings and transportation, among other needs (Siddle Walker, 2000).

Parents also supported their children's learning at home to correspond with what they were learning in school (Fields Smith, 2004). A more indirect form of involvement was evident in the sacrifices parents made to ensure their children attended school, often a financial sacrifice made for older children who could enhance the economic stability of the family if they were employed (Siddle Walker, 2001). These, among other ethno-historical studies, revealed how many of the segregated Black community schools had a reciprocal relationship with families. Both were dependent on one another, and were cognizant of this interdependence (Siddle Walker, 2001; Fields Smith, 2005; Morris, 1999).

It is important to recognize that desegregation was a pivotal moment in the history of Black family involvement. The alliance between school and family that was strong among many of the segregated schools was severely damaged by the Brown v. Board decision of 1954 (Fields-Smith, 2005). With the removal of Black educators and community schools, Black families were disconnected from the Euro-centric classrooms their children now attended. A shared commitment of resilience, collaboration, racial uplift, and collective struggle was now diminished by the breakdown of this community. In desegregated schools, Black families often contended with dialect and cultural barriers, segregation within schools (such as tracking), and teachers' low expectations of students (Fields Smith, 2005). Moreover, the culture of schools promoted a deficit perspective of Black families that persists today.

Despite the negative consequences of desegregation on family school partnerships, Black families continue to be involved and concerned with their child's education. Looking beyond the school-family partnership as a model of family involvement, Auerbach (2007) explores the ways families of color navigate their perceived exclusion from school and support their children's education. These parents' involvement ranged in form from vocal school advocacy to strong emotional support. Auerbach found that many parents had challenging experiences in school when they were children and developed a distrust of schooling, teachers, and administrators that affected the way they interacted with the school on their children's behalf. For these families, support took a behind the scenes mode, and was often unapparent to the school faculty.

counterstorytelling.

The education that Black families pursued for their children did not just take the form of advocacy, sacrifice and patronage. Education, as Shujaa would define it, also occurred within the home. In her work on how Black and white children learn race, historian Jennifer Ritterhouse (2006) analyzed the oral histories of adults who grew up in the Jim Crow south. Her study revealed pedagogical moments of counterstorytelling shared between parents and children. Counter-storytelling, one of the major tenets of critical race theory, can be defined as a method of storytelling that aims to cast doubt on the validity of typically privileged narratives and to challenge how power is used to privilege some forms of knowledge over others (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Reminiscent of W.E.B. Du Bois' essays on dual consciousness, these oral histories addressed the dual identity that many Black children experienced in the Jim Crow South and continue to experience today. Many families reinforced this dual consciousness not only by encouraging morality and respectability but by also recognizing the racism and oppression that their children will face. Parents had to navigate the borders between one world, where they encouraged their children to succeed in education and to be honorable citizens, and another world that insisted on Black inferiority and unequal opportunities.

Similar to the support in the Ritterhouse study mentioned above, families continued to prepare their children for difficult experiences by exposing them to stories that challenged the status quo and equipped them with strategies to resist discrimination. In some cases students tell counterstories to challenge the experiences of feeling *othered* or disenfranchised in schools and to highlight their daily realities. In other situations, children listen to counterstories told by elders which also challenge the dominant epistemology

(Knight et al. 1999; DeCuire & Dixson, 2004). Sherick Hughes (2007) explores the experiences of cross generational *nuanced* Black families and the pedagogical moments that occur within the home called *Oppressed Family Pedagogy*. Hughes defines this as pedagogy that, “involves the intergenerational art of critical and reciprocal teaching and learning that is engaged at home by families battling oppression (p.51).” This pedagogy is characterized by demanding high expectations, storytelling, and conversations that address both critique and possibility, reminiscent of the critical pedagogy emphasized by Henry Giroux (1988).

strong family and community bonds.

In addition to shared experiences of counterstorytelling, and adding to the elusive nature of family involvement, it is not solely mothers and fathers who engage in these pedagogical relationships with children. The language of schooling often uses the term *parent involvement*, which marginalizes many families whose networks extend beyond the mother and father. The role of the extended family and fictive kin among Black communities is a critical element of family involvement. The Moynihan report released in 1965 fueled a growing misunderstanding and deficit view of the Black family. Holding the traditional, nuclear family as ideal, Moynihan cautioned that the destruction of the Black nuclear family would perpetuate poverty and instability. Although this report is over forty years old, the shadow it cast remains (Few, 2007).

While a significant body of literature had formed over the course of the twentieth century that viewed Black families as pathological, various scholars have countered these portraits by analyzing Black family structures through a critically conscious lens (Billingsley, 1991; Hill, 2003; Few, 2007; Wilson, 1986; 1989). Historically, Black

families were initially ripped apart by the Middle Passage that violently removed them from their homes. In the generations to follow, many families were continuously disrupted through the constant selling and transferring of slaves from one plantation to another. Through this social devastation they learned to rely on symbolic kin networks, which included family members that were not biologically related (Billingsley, 1991; Smallwood, 2007). Although this socially acceptable form of family disruption ended with the abolition of slavery, the memory of such violence is part of the collective consciousness and has instilled particular family values across generations. More recently, many children reside in households with or in close proximity to extended family members who have flexible roles and are highly adaptive to changing societal and political contexts (Billingsley, 1991; Hill 2003). These family identities play an important role in supporting children's academic and social development (Wilson, 1989). Extended family members may provide childcare, financial, and emotional support (Wilson, 1989). There are many positive outcomes of extended family involvement. By providing emotional and financial support as well as childcare to parents, extended family members offer parents the opportunity to establish themselves through career and continued education, therefore providing a stable environment and future for their children. Additionally, extended family members engage in pedagogical encounters and counter storytelling with children (Knight et al., 1999).

Another critical fabric in many Black communities is the church. Churches have played a pivotal role in the Black community, acting as a mediator between the school and the family (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). A national survey of Black families revealed that 80% believed it was extremely important that they send their children to church and 76% reported that attending church was an important socializing factor in their own early

childhood experiences (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). Beyond its spiritual purposes, the church is a critical institution in the Black community providing support, solidarity, and resources. Lincoln (1989) writes of the multifaceted functions of the Black church:

“Beyond its purely religious function, as critical as that has been, the black church in its historical role as lyceum, conservatory, forum, social service center, political academy and financial institution, has been and is for Black America the mother of our culture, the champion of our freedom, the hallmark of our civilization" (In Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991 p. 428).

By families involving their children in their local church, they are ensuring that they experience the solidarity of the Black community, which historically comprised the Black schools as well. The church also plays a major role in community outreach in the form of educational programs. Such programs included tutoring, social skills groups, and collaboration with local schools. Some churches have responded to the educational desires of families by creating private elementary schools as alternatives or supplements to the public schools system (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991).

The research discussed above provides evidence for a strong curriculum that is present among many Black families. Through a historic dedication to education, counter-storytelling, oppressed family pedagogy, and strong familial and community bonds across generations, critical research on Black family involvement has revealed how many families who are *othered* by the institution of schooling remain invested in education.

Conclusion

The above discussion provided an overview of ways that African American families are framed in the literature on involvement in education as well as a historical perspective on the experiences of education before and after *Brown*. The aforementioned

counternarratives debunk the majoritarian lore of the Black schools as pathological, but also raise questions of how the consequences of desegregation may inform stories of the past as well as attitudes toward contemporary education. Almost 60 years after *Brown* the achievement gap between Blacks and whites still is still prominent and many children remain segregated within and between schools, while unequal distribution of resources and funding remains a prevalent concern (Clotfelter, 2004). And although critical scholarship continues to emerge and provide new and insightful ways to understand the perspectives of African American families, tensions persist between many African American families and public schools.

This dissertation intends to contribute to the above scholarship by providing new ways of exploring African American familial involvement with education and schooling across generations and within the context of multiple spheres. While many of the studies referred to above either focus solely on historical perspectives or contemporary experiences, this study insists on drawing upon social, historical, and political contexts and bridging the temporal gap between pre and post *Brown* eras through the intergenerational family pedagogy performed across generations of two African American families in the South.

CHAPTER THREE

Moving Other People's Stories: A Postcritical Method of Inquiry

Your Story, My Story, Our story

As I struggled to conceptualize how to represent and re-perform my participants' stories in this dissertation, I found myself asking, " Whose stories are these? Where is the line drawn between their stories, my stories, and our stories?" The answers are unclear. The realm of postcritical ethnography is a messy place. Postcritical ethnography respectfully honors the difficult nature of research that aims to "push the conversation forward, making way for the masses of previously excluded voices, experiences, ways of knowing and being, and dreaming. (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004 p.24)" The way I understand it, research that honors the complicated intertwining of social structures, identities, and narratives in our daily lives can never be sufficient or complete. We engage in postcritical research, not to provide solutions or generalizable results, but to further our questions and critiques and to move the dialogue forward. Thus, this methodology serves not only to explore the Cooper and Jordan families' stories, but to challenge the ways we engage in research across difference by drawing the researcher into the narrative and the critique.

This postcritical ethnography is a composite of oral history, narrative, and performative approaches to research and analysis. While oral history is a methodology commonly associated with research on African American experiences, it has less often been used to explicitly understand contemporary relationships between families and schools. Grele's (1975) description of oral history lays the foundation for this project:

“Oral history should be a way to get a better history, a more critical history, a more conscious history which involves members of the public in the creation of their own history (p.viii).” Elaborating on Grele’s notion of oral history, this dissertation is informed by understandings of narrative performativity, positionality and critique.

Drawing from the works of Langellier and Peterson (2004) and Chase (2005), the following four criteria of performative narrative studies inform this project: embodiment, situated constraints and context, legitimation or critique, and finally, performativity. While there are many approaches to narrative analysis, such as textual or discourse analysis, I have chosen to engage a thematic analysis of the interviews while attending to the performative nature of the family stories. The following narrative components of this study call for a strong emphasis on reflexivity and positionality.

1) Narratives are embodied. Embodiment refers to the way stories are experienced sensually through dialogue and interaction with the Other. Langellier and Peterson explain that embodiment can be described in two forms. First, the performer’s experiences of identity (race, class, gender, age, sexuality etc.) are embodied in her/his stories. Second, stories are physically and sensually experienced by our bodies, through sound, touch and sight. It also emphasizes the way those participating in the story are actors in the performance, or what Pollock (2005) refers to as poesis becoming kinesis, “the embodiment of symbolic knowledge in social action (p3).” Here it is also important to scrutinize the ways our racialized identities are embodied through actions and dialogue. Throughout my study I kept a journal detailing the experience of the storysharing interviews. I noted the ways our bodies shared the stories (body language, movement, and location) as well as the emotions I experienced throughout the research process.

2) Narratives are socially situated and contextual. This element recognizes the contexts, both symbolic and material, where stories are performed. In particular the situatedness of stories is an important element in understanding how these performances are either restricted or enabled (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). The context within which stories are shared may constrain and shape the performative process and content of the story. For example, cultural norms, expectations, and values may influence how and if a particular story is shared. The family stories shared in this dissertation will undoubtedly be constrained and shaped by their situation. As I analyzed the transcripts for themes, I also considered the context within which the stories were shared, which may have hindered or enabled the storysharing performances. For example, during one interview with an elder family member, her daughter and grandchildren were in the room beside us. I acknowledge that this proximity may have informed how and what stories were shared. Further, the interaction of our backgrounds will have undoubtedly shaped the interviews. For example, my age, whiteness, and northern identity may have prompted participants to further explain contexts that they would not have had to with an insider. For example, one participant, Sheryl Jordan, recalled the bathing and dressing rituals her family would experience each Saturday. She paused and after realizing that I would not have any knowledge of this experience due to my outsider status, she further elaborated on the details of the experience. Other times, particularly when discussing race, participants would pause and not continue their thought, changing the subject promptly.

3) Narratives engage in legitimization or critique. The stories we tell enact movement, power, and resistance (Madison, 2005). Moreover, these stories offer the opportunity to legitimize voices and perspectives that are historically delegitimized.

Throughout the study, I was mindful of the ways these stories spoke to and/or against the dominant and counter narratives of African American family involvement in education and the memories of segregated communities. I must also acknowledge how my representation of their stories in this dissertation also engages in legitimation and critique; possibly transmitting, reproducing, and reinforcing existing power structures, but also challenging, exposing, and dismantling them (Langellier & Peterson, 2004 In Madison, 2005).

4) Narratives are performative events. Performativity refers to the act of doing (telling), while performance is that which is done (told) (Denzin, 2003; Pollock, 1998). Therefore, *performativity* can be described as the iterative processes that both re-present and create historical, cultural, and political understandings embodied through the “aesthetics of everyday life” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblet in Denzin, 2003). Performativity helps to understand how stories create and reveal history through dialogue with the Other. In the storysharing experience, the roles of the teller and the listener are not distinct. They both engage in co-performative acts, embodying the layered stories that are exchanged.

Some scholars, most notably Judith Butler, have argued that performance and history are cyclically linked, in perpetual movements of iteration, “...like sad lovers, bound to repeat themselves in slow, circling half steps...” (Pollock, 1998 p.2). This conception of history and performance leaves little room for critique and agency, the backbone of postcritical ethnography. However, performativity acknowledges the iterative processes of performance and culture and also recognizes the possibility of disruptions and resistance (Conquergood,; Denzin, 2003; Pollock 1998; Madison, 2005). Although stories as performative processes are iterations of cultural norms, values and knowledge, they also take new forms and meanings. This approach also recognizes the inherent co-construction

of narrative. The story does not belong to any one person, but rather is jointly created through the interaction and liminal spaces between the teller and the listener (Chase, 2005).

This postcritical methodology moves our gaze beyond the content of these oral histories and explores the ways stories are transformed across spaces and generations. In particular, this approach acknowledges how these stories are performative processes that create and embody history through dialogue (Pollock, 2005). Thus, through these processes the line between reader, researcher, and participant are blurred. In her autoethnography on grief, Carolyn Ellis explains the aim of her method:

“I seek to reposition readers vis a vis the authors of texts of social science research, evoking feeling and identification as well as cognitive processing. As you read this story, some of you may have felt empathy with me, as you would in watching a "true-to-life" movie; some of you may have been reminded of parallels in your own lives, as in reading a good novel. Perhaps reading my work evoked in you emotional experience that you could then examine, or led to recall of other emotional situations in which you have participated. Acknowledging a potential for optional readings gives readers license to take part in an experience that can reveal to them not only how it was for me (the author), but how it could be or once was for them. (p.726)

Here the position of the ethnographer is problematized. The previously un-biased and objective researcher is now the ground for critical examination. Noblit, Flores, and Murilla, Jr. (2004) refer to this shift in the role of the researcher as a central component of postcritical ethnography. They explain that postcritical ethnography problematizes reflexivity, positionality, objectivity, and representation by requiring a critique of both the researcher and the social structures being scrutinized. By moving beyond a critique of grand narratives and power structures, postcritical ethnography also prompts researchers to question their relationship to that which they study and to reimagine methods of representation that honor the interpretive nature of this research.

Ellis' statement above speaks to the complicated nature of our stories. The moment

the words leave the teller's lips, the story is no longer hers, and perhaps it never belonged to her in the first place. But neither does it belong to the listener. Stories seems to exist in between spaces and ownership. Minh-ha (1989) writes of the ambiguity of story ownership and representation:

In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me, nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly despite our persistence in denying it. *I don't believe it. That story could not happen today.* Then someday our children will speak about us here present, about those days when things like that could happen. (p.122)

Minh-ha challenges me to consider my responsibility to honor the integrity of the Cooper and Jordan family stories as I represent them in the following chapters. Although the narratives shared in the following chapters are in the words of the participants, I must acknowledge my role in their representation. As Minh-ha reminds us, "no repetition is identical." Just as the moments of shared storytelling between myself and the participants could be understood as performative, the manner in which I share their stories in this dissertation is also a performance.

As I reimagine my voice as the ethnographer I turn to Behar (1993) and Tedlock (1990) for inspiration. Behar, in her text, *Translated Woman*, used both dialogic and narrative forms of writing to thread together her participant, Esperanza's, "verbal performance" as well as her own voice as the ethnographer. Tedlock (1990) argues that text and interpretation are inseparable. As the ethnographer, the story being retold is already interpreted. In his work on Mayan discourse, Tedlock manipulated the textual layout of his ethnographic work to represent his interpretations as woven within his stories.

He cautions that by separating the interpretation graphically, may tacitly infer to the reader that the 'un-interpreted' story is objective (1990). While my discussion of the stories occurs separately from the narratives, Behar and Tedlock remind me to convey to the reader that the family narratives are already interpreted, analyzed, and represented in ways that reflect my own understanding of their stories. While I did not change their words, the sequence of their narratives have been altered to fit the thematic structures I have developed. Throughout this process, I made every attempt possible to maintain the meanings conveyed in original participants responses.

After a thorough thematic analysis of the transcripts using Atlas TI, I decided to focus my inquiry on the stories relevant to the families' larger narrative of educational and social mobility. Therefore some stories were omitted from further analysis. For example stories revealing certain family dynamics, such as tensions with extended family, were not included in this dissertation. The stories I have omitted undoubtedly could be further analyzed to tell another story of the Cooper and Jordan families. However, I have carefully and thoughtfully included the family stories which illustrate the their relationship to schooling and education over time as well as their navigation through social classes.

Furthermore, their narratives, as they are read in this dissertation will take on new meanings as the reader brings to the text her/his own histories, stories, and understandings. Madison (2005) explains that performative writing is a deeply relational act: "Understanding performative writing as something relational means you are writing for an audience of readers and you *care* about them. You are invested in them, because you are hoping that what you write makes a difference to them and that it makes some kind of contribution" (p.192). I approach this representation of my postcritical ethnography as a

performative, relational event. I am mindful of the tensions, responsibilities, and possibilities of this interaction among the voices of my participants, the readers, and myself. Through the narratives and interpretations I share in the following chapters, I write dialogically to the Other, to the readers known and unknown, with the knowledge that these stories will continue to move and the hope that this movement makes contributes to a stronger understanding of the participants, ourselves, and our communities.

Beginnings and Process

Origins

Ten years ago, as a recent graduate with my Masters in Education, I took a job teaching at a an elementary school in Durham, North Carolina. Relocating from out of state, I knew very little about the community to which I was moving. I did however know that the school served a low income community of African American and Latina/o families, that most of our students were on Free and Reduced lunch, the suspension and discipline rates were high, and that it was considered a low performing school, weighted with sanctions from the No Child Behind Act. These characteristics describe only one story of the school, but this was the only story I knew when I accepted a position to teach an inclusive first grade classroom. Although I did not admit this to anyone at the time, or even until this moment, I was scared. I could not confess this to anyone because my apprehension to teach was in conflict with my budding identity as a feminist, anti-capitalist, and social justice activist. How could I admit that I was afraid to teach in a school that served families of color from low income communities? What does this say about my ability to confront my whiteness? What happens if I'm not that revolutionary educator I dreamt of becoming? These questions overwhelmed me, but I never uttered them aloud. However, not naming this fear, did not change the fact that I felt it. I was

uncertain how my identity as a white, Jewish, and northern first-year teacher would affect my ability to provide culturally responsive pedagogy, and more specifically, my ability to build meaningful relationships with children and families in the community.

My first year teaching was an extremely challenging and powerful experience. The relationships I made with my students and families were the most profound of all my years teaching. The following summer I relocated from my apartment in the neighboring small town of Chapel Hill to the neighborhood in Durham where I taught. The next few years living and teaching in this community continued to challenge what it means to be a critical white educator teaching in a community of color. I was constantly pushed by my students, their families, and my colleagues to confront my white privilege and to rethink what critical pedagogy looks like in the context of public schools. Not only was I moved to discover ways to teach across difference, but also to notice the spaces where our lives intersected in moments of despair, frustration, humor, and hope. My experience as a white researcher working with African American families in this postcritical ethnography echoed these challenges I experienced as a teacher. I will unpack these tensions further in the final chapter of this dissertation.

For me, teaching through a critical responsive pedagogy was an alienating experience. I didn't always get it right. I often needed help. Just when I thought my *teacherly* skin grew thick with wisdom, it was shed again and I was left vulnerable and bare. So, in many ways I have no right to critique my colleagues. After all they were some of the most dedicated teachers and administrators I've ever seen and I had/have much to learn from them. However, I couldn't help but notice a mismatch of understandings and expectations among many teachers, students, and families. During my third year teaching

at the school, I read an article by Gerardo Lopez (2001) in the Harvard Educational Review's special immigration series on the meaningful ways Latino/a immigrant families are involved in their children's education. This article led me to question the tensions between our school and the many families it served. Thus, while teaching, I developed a pilot research project that explored the perspectives of education and family involvement among families and teachers in the school. The results of this project revealed a strong commitment to education among families, but interviews with predominantly white teachers suggested a deep misunderstanding of the experiences and perspectives families brought to their child's schooling and education. This study prompted me to further question and explore the larger patterns and tensions between communities of color and systems of schooling. Thus, upon returning to the academy and over the years to follow, I continued to develop these questions and ideas which culminated in this postcritical ethnography.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited by community nomination. After speaking with some members of the community about this project, they referred me to the families which ultimately agreed to participate. I originally intended to have between three and five families participate, however finding families who meet the study's stringent criteria proved challenging. Each family would identify as African American or Black, have three generations willing and able to participate, with the youngest generation currently attending elementary school, and all three generations must have lived in Parrish City for an extended period of time. There were some families willing to participate but they did not meet the full criteria. In some situations, the elder generation currently resides in a

different state or the youngest generation is either too young (i.e. not school age) or too old (attending high school). My intention was to include families who are contemporarily connected to elementary public schooling, but in retrospect, widening my criteria for participation may have provided more diverse narratives by including more participants. In addition to the self-imposed challenges of my selection criteria, I also faced many difficulties locating participants through community gatekeepers. I met with various prominent community figures, such as pastors, school board members, artists, and educators, all of whom were recommended to me by colleagues, teachers, and community organizers. Each of these individuals graciously took the time to meet with me and conveyed excitement for this possibilities of this project. However, each meeting ended with yet another referral to another community member. After following a number of leads and not ultimately finding families that fit my criteria, I decided to focus the study on two families who agreed to participate, the Coopers and the Jordans. While I do not know for certain why I experienced such difficulty finding participants through these local contacts, it seems that my outsider status (white, northern, scholar) and affiliation with a nearby university with a history of perceived exploitive research among many communities of color, may have contributed to this challenge.

Field Work

Two families participated in this project. Each family included three generations with whom I met over the course of a nine month period. Participants are labeled as G1, G2, G3 indicating the generation of each participant. For example, G1 denotes Generation 1, a grandparent. The project consisted of three phases. During phase one, I met with G1 and G2, in their respective homes, for a semi structured interview that lasted between one

and two hours. This first interview consisted of questions focused on their stories of their childhood home and community, memories of schooling and education, experiences with desegregation, and commentary on other generations' education. Upon completion of this phase, I transcribed the interviews and analyzed for initial codes to assist in the development of the phase 2 semi structured interview guide. Moreover, based on the stories shared in the first interview, I did an archival search in the local community library's historic collection to explore relevant newspaper articles, maps, and texts. This information also informed the questions guiding the second interview in phase two.

Phase two consisted of follow up individual interviews with G1, G2, and G3 in their homes. Each interview with G1 and G2 lasted between one and two hours and focused on a deeper exploration of their childhood communities and schools, their experiences with racism, segregation, and desegregation, their memories of their elders' and children's education, and the messages and values shared across generations. Interviews with G3 lasted for approximately 30 minutes and focused on their experiences in school, their leisure time outside of school, and their stories of their elders. The final phase of the interview process was the family storysharing event. At this interview, all participating family members gathered for a group interview that lasted approximately two hours. Family members were asked to come prepared to share a story with their family. While I gave them permission to share any story they'd wish, I shared with them the following prompts to assist them if needed: share a story related to school or education that you feel was a pivotal moment in your life; share a story of a time in your childhood when you struggled; share a story that you heard your family member(s) or elder(s) tell you again and again. At the storysharing event, we gathered in the eldest generations' home and

took turns sharing stories. I also shared a story from my own childhood, following the prompts listed above. Unexpectedly, some family members did not prepare a story ahead of time, and rather shared a number of memories from their upbringing. During the group interview, family members responded, elaborated, and commented on one another's stories. After each family member shared at least once, I asked them to reflect on this story sharing experience. Upon completion of this group interview, as this was our last meeting for the project, we had a small celebration with dinner and cake to honor the families' participation over the past nine months.

Over the next few months I carefully listened and re-listened to the audio recorded interviews and fully transcribed each, attending to the subtle inflections in their voice, the emotions they convey, as well as the length of the pauses in between statements. While self-transcribing the interviews delayed the completion of the project by a few months, I believed it was important to personally transcribe the data in order to develop an intimate relationship with the words and stories of my participants. Thus, while reading, analyzing and organizing my participants' narratives, I could hear their voices and remember the ways the stories were embodied months ago.

Analysis and representation

Transcripts were analyzed with the assistance of Atlas TI. Using a process of iterative coding, transcripts were coded for initial broad themes and then re-coded with a more narrow focus that emerged from the first round. In addition to emerging codes and themes, alongside in the margins of the transcribed data I included notes-on-notes that entail my intuitive responses, reflections, questions, or clarifications (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 1995). This is a way of including a transparent interpretive presence through the

analytical process. The interviews were initially analyzed two ways: 1) cross-generational and 2) cross-sectional. A cross generational analysis allowed me to explore the phenomenon of family stories across generations within the family, to understand the themes that are shared across generations as well as to see how the generations speak to and against one another. This analysis also allowed me to study the family narratives that are created when their stories are threaded together. For example, through this analysis I was able to see the stories that all members of the Jordan family shared about their experiences with public schools.

Table 1.
Cross Generational Analysis



Cooper Family	Jordan Family
 G1-Thomas G2- Brianna G3- Simon	 G1- Sheryl G2-Melissa G3-Maya & Isaiah

Table 2.
Cross Sectional Analysis

Cooper Family	Jordan Family
G1	←————→ G1
G2	←————→ G2
G3	←————→ G3

A cross-sectional analysis provides information within generations across families. This analysis provided emerging themes, continuities, and discontinuities evident across all G1s, G2s, and G3s. However, after completing both analyses, I found the cross generational to be more compelling and able to provide insight into the experiences within each family across generations. Thus, this is how the family narratives are represented in the chapters to follow.

Upon completion of a thematic cross-generational analysis, participant's narratives were organized based on theme, rather than their chronology or the order in which their stories were originally shared. This process is referred to as restorying (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Creswell, 2008). Clandinin and Connelly (1990) suggest a process they call burrowing, where attention is paid to the particular: "the event's emotional, moral and aesthetic qualities (p.11)." In chapters five and six, I represent the narratives of the Jordan and Cooper family stories organized thematically, but in the participant's own words. Each theme, such as *moving toward*, *staying away*, *staying together*, *representation*, and *education and intergenerational investment* are followed by first, second, and third generations' narratives respectively. Occasionally I added a phrase or word to their stories, noted by italics, to support the clarity or flow of an idea, but not to change the content or message originally conveyed by the participants. Lastly, due to the limited narratives shared by the third generation (due largely by the brevity of our interview) I included both generation three's narratives as well as elder generations' perspectives on their children and grandchildren's' experiences. Since my interpretations and voice are explicitly shared in chapter six, I have chosen to let the narratives stand on their own in their respective

chapters. However, as noted earlier, their stories are already interpreted through the restorying and retelling processes. Their performance takes on new form as they move from, "voice to ear to hand to eye (Tedlock, 1990 p. 133)."

Memberchecking

After I organized their participants' stories by theme, I gave each participant a copy of their stories to review. After explaining the larger narrative of upward social and educational mobility to which both families' stories speak, I asked participants to read their stories and share with me their questions, comments, and suggestions, paying particular attention to how I re-constructed their stories thematically. Additionally, participants were also given the opportunity during this memberchecking process to request certain parts of their stories to be omitted from the final publication. Their comments have been integrated into my interpretations and analysis.

Relationships and Reciprocity

Dwight Conquergood (1982) addresses the possibilities and ethical dilemmas common in ethnographic research and suggests *dialogic performance* as the most ethical approach the relationship between the participants and researcher. He writes, " The aim of dialogical performance is to bring self and other together so that they can question, debate, and challenge one another...Dialogical performance does not end with empathy. There is always enough appreciation for difference so that the text can interrogate, rather than dissolve into, the performer (p.10)." While I am uncertain how well this was achieved, I aimed for a relationship with my participants, their stories, and this inquiry in general as a dialogic performance. To the best of my ability, I engaged in genuine conversation with my participants, sharing my own stories as they came up naturally in our conversation. But

building relationships in the context of this research, as an outsider with limited to no prior relationship with the participants, was a challenge. While I believe more meetings with the participants may have elucidated deeper narratives, the Jordan and Cooper families were extremely busy, and asking them to give me more of their time so that I could have the opportunity to build relationships with them seemed complicated at best, selfish at worse.

I did, however, attempt to build a trusting relationship with my participants by following through with my commitments, sharing meals together, and sharing stories about my own life. Each visit, I brought a homemade dessert to share with the family. I grew up in Jewish household where food was everything; if there weren't leftovers, you feared desperately that your guests would leave hungry. My grandmother was known to share food with anyone, which was exemplified the afternoon she offered matzoh ball soup to the UPS man delivering a package to our home. These sweet offerings were still the topic of conversation among participants months later.

Over the months I became more comfortable with my participants and we often spent time getting to know one another "off the record" outside the boundaries of the official interview space. Conversation with participants throughout the study often turned to my pregnancy, an unavoidable intruder into the dialogue, which progressed over the nine month field work period. Stories of birth often continued long after the recordings ceased, and while they were not incorporated into the analysis of this project, these conversations over cake and coffee or on front porches during lingering goodbyes contributed to a dialogic relationship of inquiry.

As a form of reciprocity, I offered families the option to receive a bound copy of their families stories for their own personal family archive. While I debated whether or not

to offer monetary compensation for their time, I ultimately decided that paying someone for their intimate stories seemed inappropriate. I chose instead, to offer their book of stories as it provides meaning and connection across generations that can be valued for years to follow.

Introductions

The Jordan Family

generation 1: Sheryl Jordan (b.1947).

Before Sheryl would officially agree to participate, she requested during our first phone conversation to meet in person, "eyeball to eyeball" as she would say. The day of our first meeting, I walked into the consignment store where Sheryl is the owner, manager, and sole employee. This first encounter with Sheryl displayed harbingers of the woman I would get to know over the subsequent nine months; a dedicated single mother and grandmother with a strong commitment to her family and community. Although self conscious of my identity as a northern, white researcher, Sheryl's frequent smiles and warm personality lulled my anxieties.

Sheryl seems to form easy bonds with strangers. During our first phone conversation, Sheryl was working the register at her store and put me on hold while I overheard her accept money from a customer who owed her half the cost of the purchase from a few days prior. Sheryl allowed her to take the item with the understanding that the customer would come back and pay her when she had the money. Throughout our first meeting, her connection to the community was also apparent through the frequent interruptions by fellow elder community members and alumni from Sheryl's alma mater, a historically black college about fifty miles from Parrish City where she is running for

president of the alumni association.

At the end of this first meeting I extended my hand graciously, "Thank you Ms. Jordan so much for your time and support for this project." Sheryl's bypasses my handshake and wrapped her arms around me, "I'm a hugger, girl. And call me Sheryl!"

generation 2: Melissa Jordan (b.1980).

In a recent conversation with Sheryl, she recounted a story that Melissa shared with her about a recent business trip to Israel. She explained how Melissa was in a room giving a presentation when the banging sound of bombs in the distance bounced off the conference center walls. She was promptly rushed to a bomb shelter where they waited until word came that it was safe for them to return above ground and go back to work. And that's just what Melissa did, resuming business as usual. She's been back to Israel a few times since and she doesn't talk about that experience with her family.

Melissa, a thirty-two year old single mother of Maya (eleven) and Isaiah (six), comes across as confident and to the point. She shares her mother's short hairstyle as well as her generous and considerate disposition . The first time I met Melissa during an interview with her mother, she and her children pounced through the backdoor of Sheryl's home, directly behind where Sheryl and I we were sitting. The kids threw their backpacks into the living room and sunk into the couches to complete their homework. It was after seven on a Wednesday night, and Melissa had just picked them up from basketball practice. Melissa rummaged through her mom's freezer to find a suitable dinner for the kids. After popping some frozen pizza into the oven, she joined her children in the living room and began catching up with emails and work on her smart phone. While Melissa works hard to strike a balance between work and parenting, she was clear with me about

her priorities. Her words moved with the existential weight of mothering as she explained: "All of my major life events occurred after they were born. I think that was when life really became life for me."

generation 3: Maya Jordan (b. 2001).

I pulled my car up to Sheryl's home. Maya and Isaiah were on the front porch playing. Struggling to carry a box full of baked goods, my notebooks, recorder, and 30 pound belly, I waddled up the driveway. Maya promptly ran down the porch steps toward me and offered to help carry my belongings. "Thanks, Maya!" I exhaled as I continued to toddle up the driveway. "Yes, Ma'am," she replied. Maya, a tall and slender girl, often wears her hair pulled back in a pony tail and a pair of thin framed glasses. During my interviews with her she compared herself to Thomas Jefferson, describing how they both loved to read. During recess, she occasionally removes herself from the bustle of her friends playing to sit down in the corner of the playground with a good book. Her mother describes her as outgoing and strong. She explains, "She said she wanted to play football. And I was like, 'Yeah right! I don't want my daughter out there on the football field in pads and taking some hits!' In her mind she was thinking, 'That's not fair! If I'm a girl I should want to play I should be able to play.' "

generation 3: Isaiah Jordan (b. 2006).

Each time I visited the Jordan family, Isaiah was always playing with his sister, Maya. During my interviews with their mother, Melissa, we would often hear slams, bangs, and pops emanating from their bedroom upstairs. Melissa only acknowledged the sounds with a smile when my head would jerk upward toward their bedroom with concern, indicating it was common for the two children to play loudly in the evenings after school.

Every now and again, we would hear Isaiah tip toe into the kitchen and circle the brownies or cake that I brought.

Isaiah knew to speak with reverence to his elders and I would often hear him respond to his grandmother or mother with a, "yes ma'am." He also acknowledges his identity as the only male in their household. While talking during a meal together, Isaiah bluntly states, "I'm the only boy that comes here." We all giggle and his grandmother asks, "do you like being the only boy here?" He smiled, paused, and resumed eating his cake.

The Cooper Family

generation 1: Thomas Cooper (b. 1946).

I pulled into the dark culdesac looking for Thomas's home. Walking toward what I hoped was his house as the darkness obscured all house numbers, I followed the yellow stains on the pavement which poured down from the home's second story windows. Uncertain if I was in the right place, I called Thomas's home phone. He flipped on the porch light and opened up the front door. A medium build man with full graying hair greeted me with a gentle smile and a handshake. Later that day, Thomas, would curate his wall of framed awards, laudatory letters from employers, and news clippings honoring his high school glory days as a star football player. We also spent significant time listening to CDs of his gospel music, which he recorded when he used to tour regionally and along the east coast with a gospel group. As we listened, he sang along with the music, his head tilting back and his fingers tapping his knee, "I thank, oh Lord--bam bam! Telling the Lord, you thank him in the morning....thank him in the noon time....thank him in the evening....thank in the- the- mid- the mid- the middle of the night!" At our first meeting, we listened to his entire gospel CD, singing and interjecting with memories the songs

would conjure.

generation 2: Brianna Dawes (b.1978).

Brianna and I were acquaintances years ago. I hadn't been in touch with her for some time, when I learned through another community member that Brianna's family was born and raised in Parrish City and may be interested in participating in this project. It's rare to see Brianna without a smile on her face. She speaks in a soft tone with cadences that are a reminder of the southern town where she grew up. Brianna, similar to her father, chooses to focus on the positive aspects of her upbringing and aims to bring that positivity to her work counseling young children. In our interviews she often talked about the importance of being good and doing good, trusting in God, and helping her children find the good in others.

generation3: Simon Dawes (b. 2005).

Simon, although only eight years old, converses with maturity and a clear respect for his elders. The couple of times he neglected to refer to me as "ma'am," his mother promptly stepped in to remind him. Simon enjoys all aspects of school, particularly math, although he was careful to note that he does not enjoy waking up early, unless it's on a Saturday morning when his Wii console awaits. He describes having a number of friends at school, and spends a lot of time with cousins, his younger brother, and other family members outside of school. He also participates in basketball, baseball, and football and takes piano lessons throughout the school year.

Participant Overview

The table below provides an overview of the schools attended by each participant and the segregation status at those schools as well as employment information. The shaded

squares indicate a school or place of employment that is also attended by another participant. For example, both Brianna Dawes and Melissa Jordan attended Sampson Hill elementary. This chart also illustrates how three separate generations attended or currently work at East Parrish Elementary. Thomas attended East Parrish in the 1960's when it was a *de jure* segregated African American school with Black teachers and administrators. Melissa Jordan attended during the 1980's when it had turned to a predominantly white school with white teachers and administrators. Finally, Thomas's daughter, Brianna Dawes, currently works at East Parrish Elementary, which has transitioned again to a *de facto* segregated school serving Black and Latino/a families.

Table 3. Participant Schools and Employment

SCHOOL/EMPLOYMENT	Cooper G1	Cooper G2	Cooper G3	Jordan G1	Jordan G2	Jordan G3
Elementary	Willow Creek	Sampson Hill	Columbus Charter	Smithville Elementary	Sampson Hill/ East Parrish	Parrish Christian Academy
Elementary Segregation Status	<i>De jure</i> Segregated	<i>De facto</i> Segregated	Integrated	<i>De jure</i> Segregated	<i>De facto</i> Segregated/ Predominantly white	Integrated
High School (graduated)	East Parrish(1969)	Williams High (1989)	N/A	Smithville High (1965)	Columbia High (1998)	N/A
High School Segregated Status	<i>De jure</i> Segregated	<i>De facto</i> Segregated	N/A	<i>De jure</i> Segregated	Predominantly white shifted to predominantly Black	N/A
Employment	Retired doctor's assistant at Forrester University Medical Center/part time work at hotel/entrepreneur	Counselor at East Parrish	N/A	Retired Social Worker	Administrative position at Forrester University	N/A

Geopolitical Context

Parrish City is a medium sized city in the southeastern United States. In many ways its history reflects the patterns of race, class, and urban renewal that play out in cities across the country. Parrish City was established as a railroad town with an economy deeply rooted in the profits and demands of its agricultural crops. Of particular interest is Parrish City's rich history of a powerful Black elite class and business community which thrived

during the early twentieth century. This was most prominent in the Greenpoint neighborhood where Black owned businesses flourished, including the establishment of churches and a historically black university nearby. However, Parrish City has a complex history of tensions along racial and social class divides. While many whites felt threatened by the prosperous and self-sufficient Black community, they attempted to maintain the status quo by appealing to the Black business class' ability to quell the Black working class community's struggle for political power by refocusing their efforts toward industrial work. Over the course of the twentieth century growing class divisions continued to develop among the Black community in Parrish City. Many members of the business class lived outside of the city center, away from the slowly economically declining Black neighborhoods which were once the hallmark of African American success and prosperity. Years later the city's plan for urban renewal as well as the construction of a major highway displaced residents and further complicated the city's growing poverty and class divisions.

Just as there were tensions across social class, Parrish City experienced unequal distribution of resources among its *de jure* segregated schools. Although a small number of African American students integrated into predominantly white schools a few years after *Brown*, Parrish City did not officially mandate desegregation until 1969, fifteen years after *Brown*. Now, almost sixty years after the supreme court decision, Parrish City continues to experience *de facto* neighborhood and school segregation, as well as a growing number of charter, independent, and religious schools.

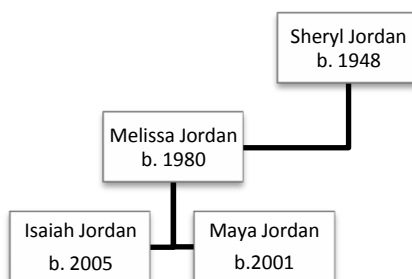
The above portrait of Parrish City is brief and incomplete. In order to protect the anonymity of the Cooper and Jordan families and their community, I was limited to which stories of the city I could share here. I struggled to balance details with confidentiality, in

an effort to provide a story of a city with a multifaceted history of race, class, education and political struggle. However, I intend for the family narratives shared in the following two chapters to provide more nuanced and intimate stories of the lives lived in Parrish City.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Each Move is an Upward Move": Jordan Family Narratives

Figure 2: Jordan Family Tree of Enrolled Participants



Moving up Through Moving Away

Sheryl's story:

childhood home.

I was born in 1948 in a very small rural community about 100 miles east of Parrish City called Smithville². We were sharecroppers. We grew up being farmers or sharing the crops with regards to the labor and I guess took the proceeds-- if there were any-- at the end of the year. Always a wooden house that you could see under, that we used to play under, playing hide and seek under the house. But always a big house. A big yard, plenty of trees, pecan trees in the back. Gosh, there's a smokehouse on the side with all of the cured meats: the hams, the sausage in the one section. Mom had canned vegetables or fruits that would last you through the winter.

² Italicized phrases indicate ideas that I paraphrased or reworded for clarity.

We were a large family. Seven girls, no boys. And my mom and dad, of course. But always plenty of room, always plenty of food. Because of being farmers, quite naturally we had the garden *and* plenty to eat. The funny thing about the neighborhood is when you're sharecroppers your immediate neighbors were other sharecroppers as well, and the houses were close together. But I tell when nightfall came it would be black as night, because there were no lights and the only lights you saw were cars that would go by periodically and you'd look out the window, and because we lived up a lane we would be mesmerized. It was always like, "There's one!" A car going passed and you could see the lights.

It was seven of us *children*, and while the house was large, we also had two first cousins that lived with us. One room your parents slept in but that was also the sitting room and then our room was off to the side. *In our room* were two double beds that *all seven of us girls* had to share. We had boxes, literally cardboard boxes, under the bed that our underwear was in. Everything else you hung up on a makeshift--there weren't closets, so dad would put this long board, it was almost as long as the wall, and there would be nails on it and that's where you hung the clothes up. But everything was clean. I mean we had to wash every week. I mean we-had-to-wash! There was so much to wash with seven girls and a mother and a father that we had to take a half day out of school. Because there was so many of us, during wash day (we didn't have a washing machine early on) we had the tubs and the scrub boards and dad would always say, "Don't hang mine on the line with you alls!" There was seven girls and our mother made eight, and the backyard was nothing but clotheslines. A line of panties, a line of bras, a line of undershirts!

Having a family of all girls, however, did not excuse us from working hard. The landlord didn't care that you were all girls, you were sharecroppers. So you were expected

to do your share of the labor. And so my oldest sisters, I can recall them working much harder. They worked reeeally hard. When I say hard they could work just as hard as my dad. Sometimes they turned it into a fun kind of thing though, and not only did they get up early in the mornings and have certain assignments, but when it came time for breakfast-- it was so funny! Mother would have gotten up and made homemade biscuits! She could have put some local restaurant to shame with the meal she would have made. Think about it now. We didn't have the luxury of fast food. But mom would have to make sure she made enough biscuits because my two older sisters would try to out-eat my dad to see who could eat the most biscuits. It was just really, really cool.

We were poor. We were farmers. Now, poor by society's standards. But by our standards we were very rich. We were wealthy. We never went without food, we never went without clothing, we never went without a whole lot of love from especially our mom. We worked the farm because that's what we knew to do. We didn't know we were poor. I didn't know anything about an allowance. Never had a need for money. Seriously. I know that sounds crazy but, where you gonna go to spend it?

from rural to urban.

After separating from my husband I felt that I had to get out of Smithville. It was an opportunity for me to leave and little did I know it was the beginning of a life changing experience for the better. So, I have no regrets. No regrets. I look back on it as it was the perfect thing to happen to get me out of my comfort zone and to just basically move on. And so that's how I got to Parrish City. It was sooo different from Smithville. Smithville was nothing like the metropolitan area that Parrish City is. We did not have the shopping center, we didn't have the fast food restaurants, we had a couple of the mom-and-pop type

things. We didn't have a McDonalds. Gosh, everything closed on Wednesdays at, at noon. The banks and supermarkets closed at noon. Compared to, ooh, coming to Parrish City-- the city never sleeps so to speak. And people are so different. For the most part the people in Smithville were blue collar people. Good people but not educated people for the most part. The majority of the people are not educated. They are either high school dropouts or *went to the* community college twelve miles down the road. *They were* factory workers, that kind of thing. When you get here, you are surrounded by several universities! *Moving to Parrish City, I didn't know much about it, I really did not.* Coming from Smithville, a rural country area and moving to the city, there are so many things you don't see, so many things you don't know what to expect, you just know that there is a huge difference. And you like what you're seeing because of the action. You're seeing different people. At home you're either white or Black. Literally. But once you got here-- it was just so different.

You're gonna laugh at this. When I was working in Smithville, I was making about \$7,500 a year and Parrish City wanted to start me at a little more than \$13,000. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Hear me. But little did I know cost of living was so much more here than at home. And so what I thought was gonna be extra money, really was not extra money because there were necessities that required it. And then, boy those golden arches! We didn't have those golden arches in Smithville. Mind you, I'm having to watch how I spend, but when *my daughters* saw those golden arches, they felt that their car had to go through that, so sometimes I would go out of my way not to go past the golden arches. Because I would cook at home and you learn to survive. We were not the eat-out bunch but I would treat them on Saturdays *when we'd go* to Church's or Bojangle's.

My daughter Melissa was five when we first moved to Parrish City to a neighborhood called Magnolia Gardens. Working as a social worker, one of my colleagues told me about townhomes that were being constructed near Sampson Hill Elementary, where Melissa would go. You could rent with the option to buy. I applied and of course got the townhouse brand new. We lived in a cul-de-sac and it was great. Brand new and neighbors were great, IBM-ers. One woman, her son was a well know basketball player went on and played with Carolina and went on to play with the pros and now he's coaching. So we lived in a very quaint little neighborhood.

from urban to suburban.

A few years after living in Magnolia Gardens we moved out of the city center to the suburbs. I guess you could say that crime is a factor. The quality of the folk who lived in those townhomes when I was there started moving out gradually, and the property value and the upkeep just started going downhill. There was a project back there and there was crime in that area. As a matter of fact, my oldest daughter was a victim of an attack on our stoop. I was upstairs and I heard the key in the door and then all of the sudden I heard this gosh awful screaming and June ended up falling into the door. The door opened and she fell in and she said that she had just been attacked. Someone stole her purse, I mean they came up and blindsided her. They tussled and he fell on her, and her knee hit the step. She ended up needing to have surgery because of that. It was time to go. It was. It was just time to go. Things just started changing after that. You had papers delivered and if you didn't go out and pick that paper up there would be kids who would come by and take the paper and then go out and resell it. That happened several times. You would go out and you

would almost catch them in the act and they would act like they didn't know what they were doing. I started to see the change and *I was ready to buy a home. To move.*

After leaving Magnolia Hill, we moved to Deer Run, a suburb outside the urban area of Parrish City. I call that house my starter home. I had only planned to be there five or six years and I ended up being there ten. *Compared to Magnolia Hill* there was more room, more land, spacious. Houses weren't close together. *I guess owning the property versus renting.* More time involved with having to mow my own lawn. The folk took pride in their property and I've always taken pride in mine. And so I fit right in at the time. There were only three black families over there and everybody else was white.

But same problem *as with Magnolia Hill.* When I purchased the home there were very few homes over there. It was ideal. Because the only traffic that was coming in and out was the people who lived in the cul-de-sac or people who were visiting. And somehow or another I missed it. They said that a flyer was put in our mailboxes to let us know that a development was coming in behind us. It was all wooded area. But that a development was coming. I missed it. And because I did not get that notice that everybody else got for whatever reason, the white families started moving out when the construction started and they had to have known what the outcome was going to be. And I don't blame them. You understand what I'm saying? So they started moving out. *Then the few Black families in the neighborhood moved out, too.*

The new development came and the homes were different from ours, the value of the homes were different and it was like it was a million of them, and that brought in the families with children and some of them had behavior problems. I can recall, two things happened over there that was a red flag for me. I think it was the assembly of a gang. I

would come in and I would turn to go into my cul-de-sac and it would be a group of guys there under the light and would look at me as if I was interfering with them and all I'm trying to do is get on to my street. They would look at you with such-- ugh! I didn't like that. The second thing happened, I was home alone and the doorbell rang and I wasn't about to open that door, but I did go to the kitchen and I looked out and I could only see a shadow, but I could tell that that person was casing the area. It was just eerie. And I said no. No. So, I decided I need to go on now.

Soon after Melissa graduated high school, we left the Deer Run neighborhood and moved here to the Oak Woods subdivision a few miles away. And I've been here every since. We must have moved four times. But each time, it was an upward move. Now they couldn't understand it then, but I had to put them at ease to say that each move is a better move. You don't just stay in one place. Not when you can do better. So you have to move. And each move has been an upward move. That's just how it is.

It's amazing, June and Melissa are of a different breed. They hate everything about the country. They don't even want to go out there to mow the grass. Not that they have to. But, you can see a transition, you can see where the buck stopped with me. When we go back to Smithville now there is nothing there. The fields where you lived is nothing. I'm pretty sure I've said to them that we used to live here, that there used to be a house here. But they can't visualize it because all they see now is an open field. So the, physical part is gone, but the memories are there, for me they're there.

Melissa's story

childhood home.

I remember very vividly. Magnolia Gardens was a predominately Black

community. *The neighborhood* is nestled in between the Greenpoint Heritage Center and the Clinton Street Public Housing. When I think about the neighbors that I've interacted with I don't remember there being any Caucasian neighbors at all over there. *The neighborhood consisted of* two or three cul-de-sacs of connected town homes, so they were side by side, two or three connected in groups. *There were* a good number of kids living in the neighborhood. Definitely we went outside and rode our bikes or played around in the cul-de-sac area. It's funny, maybe like after the first or second year *that we lived in Magnolia Gardens*, they put this big, huge probably ten foot fence behind our townhouses to separate the townhouses from the projects which I thought was very interesting. When I say huge I mean it was a huge fence. I feel like I remember if there wasn't barbed wire at the top, it was definitely a method to say, "stay out."

As far as our economic class, if I say middle class, that seems to be fair. I think the town homes may have been fairly new. There was a lady over there that gave piano lessons and there was a family that lived on the other side of the cul-de-sac, her son played basketball at *a local major university*. So there was a good mix of people there. A good mix. When we went across the street to the Clinton Street Projects it was a different dynamic. And I actually did the majority of my playing in the projects, because my friends from school, fifteen out of twenty probably lived there. So it was a natural gravitation to go over that way after school.

After a while I think any time you have a new community at least over a couple months, there's always that first rain of break-ins, so I think the owners of the community put *the large fence* up as a way of defense. My sister was unfortunately mugged coming into the house one evening and ended up falling on her knee, on the very edge of the brick

steps and ended up having to have surgery as a result of that. So I think those types of things accumulated so they tried to put that up as a way *of defense*, but I don't know how well that worked. At that age I don't think I could comprehend what was safe and what was not. I think initially you may have been concerned because a family member was hurt, but I don't think it dawned on me what that meant until I walked downstairs one day and you saw a crutch propped against the front door and a stairwell beam so that the door couldn't be opened. Then you realized that something's different.

from urban to suburban.

In 1991, *when I was in fifth grade*, we moved to Deer Run and we lived there until 2001. Then my mom bought *her current house in Oak Woods*, and when I went to *college* after I had Maya I came back home *to live with her and just commuted forty minutes each way*. *Moving from Magnolia Gardens to Deer Run was a dramatic difference*. Went from being in a townhome to a single family home. The neighborhood was completely the opposite. *We moved from a neighborhood that was engrained in the heart of a community to one that was off in the country*. It's not the type of neighborhood that you have now where you have the cookie cutter homes or every house looks the same, so every house was different. The communities, the neighbors were different, a little bit of a mix, I think maybe when we arrived it may have been fifty/fifty white and black.

Over the course of the ten years we lived there it had turned to a predominantly black neighborhood *with* maybe only one white family there and they lived at the very outskirts of the community. They started bringing in the cookie cutter homes and then the neighborhood went down after that. There was a change in the families that were there. Not to sound in any way, shape, or form, but we observed that the quality of the

neighborhood went down after that. Homes done by different contractors and architects brought a different dynamic. You saw it, whereas *originally* there were not abandoned cars in the street people took care of their lawns, everything was cut and crisp, those things started to change. The houses were of a different price range and so if I say-- that's not gonna sound nice though--it was a different type of family. They were predominately black families with kids, a couple single parents, male or female with children.

A fair description would be before those houses were built you had white collar and after those houses were built you had blue collar workers. There were more kids as well so you could see more kids playing outside, so for me it was kind of like attracting the same people that I played with when we lived in Magnolia Gardens. Even though we were in different communities, they had the same mentality, they lived similarly, they talked similarly, but then it got to the point that we started hearing gunshots at random. I'll never forget it, it was eleven o'clock at night and a lady came to the door and she was trying to sell car air fresheners. At that point Mom was like, "yeah, *it's time to move.*"

Maya's Story

Do my mom and grandma tell me stories about when my grandma and mom were young? They tried, but I just walked away. They told me one story and it took for-ever! I started tuning out. I was like, "yeah, yeah, I'm listening," and then dozed off. If their sentence starts out, "Well, when I was in school..." Walk away. *I know things were different back then. My grandma* was the second oldest I think and she was up at five in the morning doing chores. I was like, "OK, not really caring, but OK." Because I wake up at six. *It makes me feel like* I'm lazy. Luckily I don't have to do chores. I don't really make up my bed because we normally stay here *Grandma's house*, because mom has to work.

Isaiah's Story

Grandma, your stories are...not boring. Just not interesting. All you were talking about was playing marbles and stuff like that. *You grew up on a farm*. I grew up at Forrester University. I mean, in Parrish City. I'm bored, can we have that cake now?

Moving Up Through Staying Away

Sheryl's Story

staying away from organized politics

Back in Smithville, you're talking forty something years ago, I got a job with the school system as a teacher's assistant. And it was during that time there was an unrest in the high schools in Smithville. There were black students who were trying to get enrolled or were enrolled at the high school. And the elementary school, *where I worked*, was *directly* across the street from the high school. You could be on the second floor of the elementary school and look over at the high school and see clearly what was going on. I could see the crowds and the unrest and I can recall saying, "Why they doing that?" Can you hear me? I mean I was so out of it, I was not in touch. I was truly not in touch. Perhaps I thought it could be done a better way. I'm not making excuses for myself but whenever I saw unrest, I always felt there was a better way to get the outcome that you wanted than to have the big, large crowd and all of the noise and yelling back and forth. I don't apologize for that, I just believe I felt that it could have been handled a different way.

You see, back in Smithville we didn't get a newspaper. Hear me. Hear me. We were sharecroppers. You only went to town on Saturdays. You were segregated at the schools. You got used school books. They [white folk] got the new ones, and sometimes we were two years behind getting the books because you would see names on it that you didn't

recognize. And you knew that they were from the white school. If there was any talk about it, I'm telling you it was over my head. I wasn't comprehending what was going on.

Am I happy that I didn't participate? No. I felt like I had cheated. I felt that I had cheated. I lie to you not. I felt that I had cheated, in that I didn't want to be identified with what they were doing over there but yet when I got here I realized I was not part of...not in on the cause. But that's how it was. We weren't told. How was I to know that that it was wrong. How was I to know that was really segregation. We knew it, but...

Now if you revert back to the situation in Smithville, where I am on the second floor looking out. And then you look over and you see all of that mob over there, and you're saying, "why they doing that?" That's where I was. Not seeing things the way they were seeing it. And then I moved to Parrish City and I'm saying, "Gee, I missed out on all of that."

I think I was in denial. You see, I was always that one Black that was singled out and put in a different pedestal than everybody else was on. And I probably embraced that. And I probably wasn't going to do anything to not have that continue. It wasn't anything that I'd have to say. First of all, I was Black, I was female, half way educated, so I met, so I helped to meet quotas was the thing back in those days. Affirmative action and all that. So, I helped in that category. Black, female, we'll put her here. Token. I'm sorry that's just-- when I look back on it now that's how I saw it, and I played it... I played really well. I played it really well.

Now if you were to speak to my two sisters behind me, they may be able to tell a different story. I didn't have it. I didn't have it. When I moved here to Parrish City, ooh! They have some stories to tell you about stuff here in Parrish City, hear me. The church

that I am now a member of, the deceased pastor was one of the leaders during that day. Ya know, the marches and the demonstrations, and they talk about how he had a shotgun put to his stomach, and he told the man to go ahead and pull the trigger! I felt like I had missed out on a whole lot.

I heard stories of how Black people who came to help bring about a change, how they were treated and mistreated, but I was not actively engaged. I was in the background. Up on the second floor, literally in my head looking out and saying, "Why are they doing that?" I didn't even realize that they were doing it so that we could be, so that I could be where I am right now. Literally where I am right now. It doesn't make me feel good, but because of their struggles, because of what they did...look at my neighborhood. When I bought this house I could buy any house on this block I wanted. That hasn't always been possible. We weren't even allowed to come into the neighborhoods and this is gonna sound really bad, think of that situation in Florida where that young man [Trayvon Martin] in a gated community *was murdered*. Here is someone whose race was different felt that, he's suspicious, he doesn't need to be over here. My neighbors across the street, *Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, a white family*, I know they love me. I know, they love me. I know they love me. For who I am. My grandchild plays with their child. Mr. Reynolds is the best security system a neighborhood could have. You may not know it but he knows that you are over here. He's paying attention. He has encouraged some young men who were possibly walking through who decided to perch on the fence and he came out and said to them, " I don't think Sheryl would approve of it, and I really think you all probably need to move on. Well what if you fell on got hurt on Sheryl's property?" Just things like that. You follow what I'm saying?

staying away from public schools.

When I was getting ready to move out of Magnolia Gardens to my new home, I had to decide what to do about Melissa's schooling; whether or not to take her out of Sampson Hill and move her to a new school, East Parrish Elementary. I decided I would move her. It was the middle of the school year and so I met with the principal and told her what I was planning to do and she encouraged me. She said, " You need to take your child out of this school." It was just that bad. Melissa was a high performing child. The principal gave me her blessings and said, "Go." It was a better move because there was some programs at East Parrish Elementary that Melissa got involved in that weren't offered at Sampson at all. The resources were greater at East Parrish than they were at Sampson. I don't recall Melissa being involved in anything other than that Academically gifted program at Sampson. It was when she went to East Parrish that of course the academic program was still there but she got involved in those extra things, into the arts I guess you could say.

Now my grandchildren's education has been great. June, my oldest daughter, has been in the school system for twenty plus years now. And being a teacher she saw so much. The good, the bad, and the ugly. June is brilliant in the educational realm. She's brilliant. She got teacher of the year, I lie to you not. And when it came time for her daughter to go to junior high, the schools were so bad there, gangs, just a lot of issues, she did not want her daughter to be part of it. She did not want her daughter subjected to the negative stuff. Working in the school system, she saw an awful lot. She saw how children, particularly black kids, became marked, in other words, labeled. So all my grandchildren go or have gone to Parrish Christian Academy (PCA). It works for them. I don't have anything against public schools 'cause my girls went to public school, but my grandkids are

where they need to be right now.

Schools are just different now. Look at teachers now compared to back when I was in school. Teachers were a different social class. They were educated. We were not. So teachers were always looked up to, teachers and preachers were truly looked up to as far as the black community was concerned. Back in those days, very few of us got educated. When you look at our parents, parents uneducated, grandparents uneducated. So when it was time for us to go off to school and quite naturally you went to learn from someone who had been taught to teach you. So, you looked up to what they were able to do for you. You still respect them now, but the level of respect is not what it was because now I too can do what teachers do. It's not like you're ahead of me anymore. I'm on your level so I can respect what you can do, but I don't see you being over me with regard to status anymore. Today, some parents have more education than the teachers, some parents have more degrees than the teachers, most of the parents are making more money than the teacher is. Driving better cars, living in better homes. So it's not like the respect isn't there, but *it's just not the same.*

But at Parrish Christian Academy they have the opportunity to be in an environment where they aren't distracted because of first one thing and another. *They are afforded opportunities* they could not have gotten that in public schools. Maya and Isaiah get to go to school together. I think that the biggest difference is that they are not subjected to a lot of the negative stuff that is in the public school: the gangs stuff, the bad language, the out of control. Not at PCA.

Melissa's Story

staying away from racial politics.

When I was in high school at Columbia High, we had what we tagged race riots.

When I got to high school at Columbia High they redistricted the zone and it dramatically changed the population. So like my freshman year it was a predominately Caucasian school. They had the reputation of being the redneck school and by the time I graduated it was predominately black. It was interesting watching this change.

Some of the students didn't like how they were being treated so they staged sit-ins. There were a lot of outbursts of them having a fight between a black guy and a white guy, which kind of caused racial tensions, but there was also tensions among African Americans as well. They brought in students from different communities that were against each other. So it was just an interesting demographic all together by the time I graduated. I would never forget the sheriff's deputies, police cars, and hearing helicopters fly over.

I remember thinking at the time that I don't know if I agree with that and I didn't feel the same. My mentality was I go to school, I do my work, I go to class, I'm not trying to cause trouble, and it may have been an "I am me" mentality. If you see the conflict walk away from it. If you know the dude you were angry with is down there, then why did you walk down there? I just didn't get the intent to cause trouble, 'cause you know it just takes that one punch to be thrown for it to escalate to a whole 'nother level.

When I saw some of the people who were in the sit-ins, I didn't understand why. Because they were not your model classroom students and that's not to say that they didn't have the right to express their opinions. But I also know that there may have been some that cause fights, that have caused disruptions or that may have skipped class a day or two

that week. Some people I get why they're doing it, yeah. Others I was like, " Are you doing it because everyone else is doing it or because you really have a stake in what's taking place?"

Looking back I don't regret anything that I did or didn't do. For me, if I am very passionate about it, very headstrong about it, I'm gonna give you one hundred percent. If I'm not there yet then I won't. Because I want to make sure that I made the right decision. In my mind it was, "You were just fighting on the bus last week and now you are gonna do a sit-in? Like, what's your MO? But I don't look back at it negatively, because I loved high school and I tell people if I could just relive any part of my life again it would be high school.

staying away from public schools.

At Sampson Hill, I remember getting into fights in elementary school, rolling with the "wrong crowd." *My mom* pulled *me* out of that school to attend East Parrish Elementary, a predominantly white school. We were in a predominately black community, so for the most part, I think my mom knowing where we lived she knew there would be a lot influences there. So I remember I had gotten into a fight in school which was totally unlike me, and at that point she was like yeah, we need to go.

Would I send my kids to the Parrish City public school where I'm zoned? It was never an option. I have known for a while that the test grades were low, that the state ratings were low, I don't remember what the classification was, but basically if you were assigned to that school you can request to be moved to another school in that district. I've heard enough stories about teachers there thinking about their work as a job and not as a passion and that it reflected with the kids. It just didn't make me feel comfortable. And

talking with my sister who has worked for Parrish City Schools for twenty something years, she would not be comfortable with that being the school *where I send my kids*.

To be honest, overall I think the Parrish school system is not even half as strong as what it was when I was there. Honestly I think having younger parents, becoming parents at younger ages and maybe not having that example of, "This is what you should do," I think that's a huge factor. But at the same time, I think that the makeup of the teacher has changed and evolved over the years as well. Whereas *in the past*, you wanted to be a teacher, you wanted to be in the classroom and make a difference. And now it's just kind of a job. And so I think that lack of trust between me as a parent and you as a teacher and that you're really here to educate and embrace our kids and not just be here from 7-3 and then enjoy the rest of your day. And the respect just isn't like it was. My generation and the one before me, a lot of us had babies at very young ages so you're a child raising a child. Not instilling the same types of values or the same value system that I think my mom got, and her mom got in regards to knowing how to respect authority and elders. Teachers, at least I think from my mom's generation, were looked at as stronger authority figures than some of the politicians in your community. And now it's definitely not that way.

Melissa's commentary on Maya and Isaiah's school.

I went to Parrish City Schools, so it bothers me to say no. I know a good parent would stick with their children through everything and that includes being very vocal and very visible in school. So I could very well put them in a two-way public school setting and be that parent who is very visible, who is diligent, who is active, and feel secure in what I'm doing with them and where they are at home. But when you look at the trends you see over the past few years, and testing scores being low, and I actually worked with a

group of girls in Columbia High a couple years ago, and seeing the dynamic now compared to when I was in school and looking at my kids, I just said, "Wow, I don't know." *I* couldn't wrap my mind around that. I want them to be in a place where as a parent I feel secure when I drop them off. That in my heart of hearts, even if something happens I feel confident that the teachers would do what's in the best interest of the kids. And that's what we get at Parrish Christian Academy. Right now my instinct is not to send them to *public school*.

Moving up Through Representation

Sheryl's Story

When I was growing up we were expected to behave a certain way. No fighting, no cussing, no smoking in the streets, no going with married men. Better not come home with bad grades because we were not "dumb kids." No sassing, no talking back. And I will never forget *this*, and *it* sticks with me to this very day: *mama* taught us early on that all we had was our name and that we had to take care of it. She said to us, "Ya know, when you grow up if you're name is right, you can get just about anything that you want." She said your name stands for something. She would tell us if you owe someone something, and if you have made a promise to pay it on a certain day or certain time, and if for some reason something comes up and you're not able to do it you have to go up to them and let them know. You have to go to them and say, "I know I said I would be here on Saturday but something came up." Let them know when and make sure that you do it. And she did not appreciate if we tried to lie. That was out of the question. She wanted the truth. She said, "I can deal with the truth much better than I can a lie. So don't lie to me. If you did something, let me know that you did it and I can deal with it. Don't lie to me and say that

you didn't do and I find out later."

Mama also talked about being clean. And not just being clean outside. Ya know, it was important that your blouse look nice, your skirt look nice, but what does your underwear look like? Don't just have an outer appearance in order and the inside not be in order. In my adult life I am understanding that more. Not just that my bra and panties are matching. But I'm talking about what's truly on the inside. So make sure you're right. Treat people right. Treat people the way you want to be treated. *Know who you are*. She talked about our interaction with people of status. She would always say to us, "You can walk with kings, but it's important that you maintain the common touch." In other words, know who you are. You're gonna get the opportunity to be around some powerful people but when you're no longer around them you gotta know who you are and don't try to be up there with them when you know you're not.

You should see these photographs of me back in Smithville, I think the fifth grade. Look at that picture, look at that whole room. Look at that group. That was the Glee Club, but look at those kids. Do they look like they are hurting for anything? Look at 'em! *Bowties, beautiful dresses....* Do you understand what I'm saying? Poor and don't even know that you're poor. You don't look poor, you're not acting poor.

Melissa's Story

With the minority teachers that we had, with my black teachers, there was always a sense of, "Remember who you are." What you represent and how your actions impact how others view you and others like you. There was always that reminder, but not in a negative way. Whether it was, "Keep doing what you're doing because that's what they need to see,"

or maybe it was conversations of, "Be careful of what you do because that is what they see." It was really about knowing who I was and what I wanted to do.

My mom also encouraged me to really value who I was, 'cause back in elementary school, I was not going through an identity crisis, but I definitely changed towards the end of my time at Sampson Hill from who she knew that I was compared to what I was becoming. I had gotten into maybe two or three fights. I was still a good girl though, I did my homework and I still made the AP honor roll but then I would get into a fight. I think at that point I was kind of feeling like I had to prove myself. I was the good girl, or the goody-two-shoes, and I was tired of being put into that demographic even though that's what I was. And so I was trying to prove that I was tough too. I remember after fighting I just started crying because I knew that it wasn't me. My mom helped me know that my name was my brand and that's all I had at the end of the day. My mom would always say that. It's gonna be strong or it's gonna be weak based upon what I've done. If I was struggling with something or if I was mad or frustrated or if I didn't follow through with something that I was supposed to she would say "Your name is all you have. So if you don't take care of that then you have nothing." My mom has set the example.

Maya's Story

I have a quarter Cherokee in me and nobody believes me so I had to go to ancestry and look it up, and of course it said that my great grandma was Cherokee my granddad was Cherokee, my dad's Cherokee, I'm Cherokee. Well, I told my mom and she didn't believe me, so we went to my granddad and he said, "Yes you have a little bit of Cherokee." My dad knew and he was like, "No you don't have any Cherokee, no you don't have this, you don't have that." He was just trying to play it off because I don't think he wanted me know.

Sucks for him because I know now. When he was born people would pick on him because he was Cherokee. I said, "Daddy look, the people in my class still don't believe that I'm Cherokee so they don't really pick on me about it. And when you join the school you have to sign a bullying contract so, if they did it wouldn't bother me because I know what they're saying is trying to bring me down. I'll say, "I'm not any different from what I was when I didn't know I was Cherokee." *When I found out I was part Cherokee*, I was excited. I was happy. You learn something new every day and that was just one thing that I learned new.

Moving up Through Staying Together

Sheryl's Story

Growing up on the farm, we did such fun stuff. Lord knows our grandmother, my mother's mother, was well known in that area. That woman was something else! She was a shrewd business woman and she was a landowner, grandma was a landowner. Had a big farm, and my uncles who had a lot of sons *helped on the farm*. They sharecropped but they sharecropped within the family. The only white folks she had to deal with was the ones at the bank. She was the owner of that farm. Oh my god, you're talking about a big two story house with a front porch and then to leave the house to go to the kitchen area a long breezeway. A huge grapevine. Barns with nothing but corn stacked up, and beyond that fields of tobacco as far as you could see. Grandma had it going on. Didn't deal with anybody but her children, her sons, there were enough family members to do the crops that they didn't have to hire out. But families back then were so close. I mean they were close! Really close. Large families.

If you can just picture, living six miles out of town-- literally in a rural area--again, the only lights you saw were the lights at night, and during the day, the people that you

interacted with were the other sharecroppers or the bossman's children (because they had to work just like we did) but honey when it came time to go to town on Saturdays! You heard about those Saturday baths? Oh my god! We didn't have the luxury of indoor plumbing, so each one of us had our own wash basin, literally you had your own, so you had to heat the water to bathe in. And then we would get ready to go to town on Saturday, honey. When you got to town we had to stay together. It's just like you see in the old 1920-30's movies these older cars and we had to stay put though, meaning that once daddy parked the car you weren't allowed to move much farther than where the car was parked. Because there were so many people in the street, well, on the sidewalk, conversing and laughing and there was a Roses Five and Dime. You were allowed to go in and spend your allowance, which was a quarter, to buy those little maple nut candies. Oh my gosh they were so good! But we were so mesmerized by the crowd. Oh and then there was a sandwich shop, we didn't know anything about fast food, but we knew there was a sandwich shop that sold fish sandwiches and things like that. It was pretty cool. Back then there was this spread it had like pickles in it or something. You died and gone to heaven honey. That's just how good it was. And since it was so many of us that they couldn't afford for each of us to have a soft drink, even though it was an average bottle, 12 oz or whatever, we had to split it. We would always have to share. But that was the highlight on Saturdays. We were so rich and we didn't even know it. We were rich. Not from a money stand point but being loved by our parents, had good food, had each other.

There were not whites out there. I don't think they were congregating like we were. I don't where they could have been, Smithville was so small. When you think about it being a two stoplight town....maybe they went to a different town. You gotta remember, all

I knew was work in the farms. I never gave any thought to what white folk were doing. The only white people that we interacted with were the landlords, were the sharecroppers, we called them the bossman's kids. Don't recall them talking about anything that they did or where they went. *We were in a* comfort zone. You didn't know you weren't introduced to anything, you didn't know things could be different.

Now, let's back up. When you look at where we lived and where the boss man lived and where another white family that lived across the street, racism was there from the beginning and I didn't realize what it was. The Bossman's family would ask my mom if my sister Susie and I could come and help clean her house. My mother said yes. When we went over to help clean her house she would prepare a meal, but she separated us from the family. I didn't even realize what was happening, but Susie and I would be in a different area, just the two of us, and the family would be eating in the kitchen. I didn't see it as being wrong at the time. Not until you mentioned it just then. Hear me. It was a way of life. I didn't see it as being right or wrong, it was a way of life. That's how it was. I never looked at it as segregation but that's exactly what it was. I mean, I never even had--without you asking me--I wouldn't have thought...We had no television. We had a radio but the only time you had a chance to listen to the radio was after school and then you were listening to music. I don't recall hearing any news. You understand what I'm saying? So I didn't know that that's not how it shoulda been or coulda been. I didn't know. I didn't see it, I didn't know until you pointed that out.

In another instance, I had just gotten my license and I had my younger sister with me. I was pulled over, it was late--anything between nine and eleven is late back in those days--but for some reason he stopped me. He said I ran a red light, but I didn't. I didn't run

that red light. We were not liars, if you understand what I'm saying. But my other sister shared with me, how a cop and some of his buddies followed them home and she felt that they didn't have good intentions with her and my youngest sister. There was something about it. As a matter of fact, when they got to the house, there is no telling what their intent was. But my mother, here she goes again, came out, and said, "What is going out here?" The cops made up some lame excuse. I think she used a few choice words and told them that if they didn't get off their property that she had a gun inside or something or another. My mom didn't have a gun but...Those were just not good times.

But, the first time I experienced racism was when I was in the seventh grade. We had just moved from the country to closer to town. I was walkin' home and I was so excited that we finally had a post office and Mom gave me the combination to it and I got permission from her to walk home from school and to go by the post office. *On my way home from the post office*, there was a white man *who* stuck a dog on me. Basically it was like, "sick 'er." I turned around and there was this dog was and I was screaming bloody murder. I mean I was screaming bloody murder. I settled down, but I walked home scared and crying and when I saw Mother. Mother was walking home from the factory, and I walked down the road to meet her. I asked her, "Did a white man have the right to do that?" She said, "No." I'll never forget that day. We turned around and we walked back into town to the police station. They asked me if I could identify the man and I said, "He's wearing bright orange gloves and he was wearing coveralls." So they put me in the car in the backseat with mother, and we rode around town looking for that man and that dog. We spotted him. The point of the matter they said to mother, basically it was my word against his. He denied it. I still would like to say they believed me, but I can recall them saying to

mother there wasn't anything they could do, it was just my word against his. But I think probably that was my first experience with racism. He was a white man I'm a little black girl and I think he felt that he could do that. That was my first experience with racism and that did not happen until we moved from that farm into town.

Melissa's Story

Mom did talk about *growing up in Smithville when it was segregated* some but not in great detail, and I think she was saying that there were some incidents here and there that kind of let you know that there was that tension but she would also say that they were very sheltered from a lot of everything else that was going on because they kind of stayed in their community in their zone. I know that at times when they got older they may have gone to New York for a summer to stay with friends so that kind of gave them different exposure, but for the most part, I've never heard any gut wrenching--oh my gosh, I can't believe you went through that--kind of conversations.

Well, I take that back. She did share a couple stories with over time about growing up in Smithville and just walking down the street. I remember this one specific story where I think she said that she was maybe with one or two of her sisters walking down the street going home and I think the gentleman said, "sick 'em boy," and the dog came out of nowhere. I think that's where her fear of dogs comes from as a result of that. I could visualize that conversation but even greater than that, I'll never forget when she showed me her birth certificate and her race is listed as, "colored." I was, like, "Are you kidding me?" And she said, "Yeah, that's how they labeled us." And it stung in a way that I hadn't anticipated. I remember thinking, "You've got to be kidding me!" I would be livid if my birth certificate said "colored," but that was the term at the time. At the same time, some

people don't like the term African American, so it just depends on what the times tell you is the appropriate title.

And when you ask about experiences with racism and desegregation, I think of when I was growing up especially at Sampson Hill Elementary. To be honest because I am so fair complexion, for a while I always got the question, "Are you white or are you black?" And definitely, "She thinks she better because she's light skinned." Which is still something that I deal with till this day. So, I was always ready to defend, "No I'm not."

"Is your mom white?"

"No!"

"Is your dad white?"

"No."

"Then why you light skinned?"

"I don't know! My mom has your complexion, my dad may be a tiny bit darker..."

"Well why did you come out like that?"

"Ask God! I don't know!" So we had to deal with that in my own right but I just got used to it after a while because I was always used to defending that perspective. But when came to East Parrish Elementary, not so much. Because I kind of blended in. It was easier to figure out, I didn't have to validate who I was all the time and I didn't feel that race struggle with trying to say, it's not my fault that they looked at me before they looked at you because of whatever their preference may have been. I can't help that. So that did change. And it's something we in the African American community deal with all the time. Just as I think, fair complexion women are looked at like they think they are better or have an advantage especially if they have long hair, pretty clear skin, it's the same struggle that

dark complexion African American's deal with because they're dark and may have a natural texture, it's like we're pinned against each other.

East Parrish was totally different from Sampson Hill Elementary. It was kind of quiet, very well structured. Sampson was very comfortable for me. I felt like I was surrounded *by everyone* you knew by name. The teachers were very much involved in what you were doing and it was very hands on and at that time. They were still using rulers for discipline, like paddling her hand type stuff. It was a rowdy environment but it wasn't out of order. I went from being in a predominately black, if not completely black classroom with African American teachers from every grade to being in a mixed classroom with a white teacher whose temperament was completely opposite of what my teacher at Sampson was who was pro-African. She brought in pictures of children in Africa that she had adopted, we studied Kwanzaa, a lot of cultural activities, she would play music in the room-- it was a different environment. And then when you came to East Parrish she was very quiet, very type A: we do it this way and I expect it to be very quiet and I expect it to be this way. So it was definitely different.

But I stayed connected with the Black community through organizations that have cultural activities, they had what we would call Saturday school, so there were like four Saturdays a month we would have to get up at like seven o' clock in the morning and go to the university for classes. There were science and math courses but they were also some type of cultural activities too. And the officials from those programs were usually minority as well, so it was kind of full circle. I still participated in Martin Luther King type programs and your black history month type stuff. So I was still aware of what was going on. I think I just reached out to doing things because I wanted to do it, um, but there was

no one saying, "Hey this is your past and do this or it's gonna impact your future from a historical referencing type view." I always remember my mom in the church that she goes to now especially MLK special services and stuff that she would go to, but did anyone ever take me out to a parade or a march or to anything like that, no.

For the most part I attended my mother's church for about twenty one years before I branched out on my own. For the most part the only time we had Caucasian visitors was a special program. So the church that we grew up in was predominately Black Baptist church and then I went to predominately Caucasian church, and the Word was great, the teachings were great but there was for me a cultural disconnect. I felt like the pastor made some comments that were culturally insensitive every now and then and that when I looked around I just didn't see me. And that's not just from a racial perspective but I was a single mom, and the majority of the families of the church were married, so they fit that traditional mold that I didn't fit. But now I go to a predominately black non denominational church and there's a mix of people from different perspectives there and we're actually becoming more diverse as we grow so that was a better fit for me all around.

Sheryl's story of Maya and Isaiah

To get into Parrish Christian Academy they had to be interviewed. And when she went for her interview, we all went. It was a family thing. My grandkids get priority over everything as far as I'm concerned. Anything they want to be involved in, you better believe I am right there. Maya called before you came, "Well Grandma, at school today folks were interested in playing basketball, they're having a try out and I have my chapel clothes on." So what did I do? I went into her room, put some play clothes in a bag and took them to the school.

Melissa's Story of Maya and Isaiah

With my children's schooling, I think Explorer Charter or Parrish Christian Academy would be comfortable because I knew not just that they would have a similar set up but I also knew that there were families there that shared the same value systems that we share. And so that would help to build that dynamic *and* comfort zone as well. *As for sending them to a school with children who are similar to them, who look like them,* it is still important *but* it's not the determining factor. You want them to be able to identify with people that they see in a way that helps to reinforce who they are and they feel comfortable with who they are, but I also want them to be among diverse people. So it's not only the blacks are here or only the whites are there. I want them to be able to be themselves if they're in a predominantly African American community *and* I want them to be able to be themselves if they're in a very diverse community. Our church is predominantly African American so on Wednesday nights and Sundays when they go there they see everybody in every shade of the book for who they are, not what they look like. In school they go back to seeing a mix. Even in our home, there are different shades, so, I want them to be able to embrace that and be okay with that. It is a component but it isn't a defining component.

Moving Up Through Education and Intergenerational

Investment

Sheryl's Story

memories of school.

Back in Smithville, we had to walk a mile to catch the bus. We had to do that for several years and I can recall one summer, we were working in tobacco, just as clear as day

I can see it right now, the principal paid a visit to the farm. I can recall, that man had on some brown and white shoes and he put his foot up on the tobacco cart, gentlemanly like, and he wanted my mother to know that when school started in September that the bus would be coming down the road to pick us up. She hugged that man. She was so excited, because bad weather or whatever we had to walk that mile to get to that bus.

But *I was always the teacher's pet*. My fourth grade teacher was a beautiful woman! Oh my God! She was a beautiful woman! I think I was more mesmerized by her beauty coming from the farm and not being exposed to a lot of the things that the kids in the city had been exposed to, but she was a good teacher as well. I can recall her being very caring. Fifth grade I was the teacher's pet, honey. Sixth grade teachers pet, oh yes I was. Now my sixth grade teacher, oooh! I was her first class, meaning she was fresh out of college and she was tall and she had some curves! To this day this lady still has those curves and we are good friends to this very day. Mr. Harris, my eighth grade teacher, didn't take any mess and his standards were very high. He expected you to perform. I can recall I got a whooping once, I think I pushed somebody. During those days they had permission from parents, it was almost like it was understood, that if you got out of line they had permission to discipline you and then when you got home you got another whooping. Girl, I tell you. But I ended up being his babysitter for his family for several years. We were good friends, well he died earlier this year but his wife Sylvia and I are still good friends.

family involvement.

The teachers, oh my God, they took pride in *their work*. Oh you're talking about a village! *Not only did the teachers like me*, all of the teachers liked my mother because they knew she was a lady that was about something and worked for the good of everybody. I'm

very serious about that. They respected her so much they would actually visit our homes some evenings just to sit and talk and laugh with my mother. No reason other than just to socialize. She was something else. My mother was a standout. My mother was PTA president. She was a mover and a shaker in the community. I lie to you not. That woman had some staying power. To this day, she is still something. She told us, all seven of us, that she wanted us to have things better than what she had when she was coming up. And she was a role model. I can recall one special meeting that they put together and I'm telling you it seemed like there were thousands of people that showed up for that meeting in support of a school function or school activity. It was awesome! That woman was awesome. And she was good lookin'! Wooosh! She was cool. She really was. I followed in my mother's footsteps, I was PTA officer, involved in anything they were involved in, didn't miss one play, not one. You name it, I was there to give them support. um, gee.

intergenerational investment.

One of the things that my sisters and I decided to do, and we will have celebrated ten years this year, we set up a scholarship fund for children in Smithville. The scholarship is to help those kids attend the cultural center there during the summer. There's nothing to do in Smithville, so we raised funds that allow the kids whose parents can't afford it to go to the camps during the summer to get them off the street. I'm telling you, to get them off the street. They take field trips, there's a computer lab set up there, they get a hot meal, they got snacks. But its all, it's in honor of my mother. It's called the Simone Collins Youth Camp Assistance Fund, after my mother.

My mother was something else. Back in those days they weren't educated. My daddy didn't even get to the third grade, he could not read or write. My mother got as far as

the eighth grade, but did not finish. So, back then I had a job working as a recruiter with the Smithville Community College to encourage folks to complete their GEDs and my mother was the second person I recruited. Her best friend was the first person-- I was a recruiter for that program. So her best friend was the first one I recruited only because I went past her house first. And she bought into it right away. When Smithville Community had its graduation they marched because they completed their GEDs. And they had the caps and gowns on and everything. You would have thought she had gotten her PhD. That was good. That was good.

Both my daughters were pretty much academically gifted I guess you can say. They were in the top of their class so they were involved in a lot of things and sometimes being at the top when you got other folk looking up at you, sometimes that's incentive. Anyway, I am so proud of both Melissa and June. Because they are making monumental sacrifices for their children, to have better than what they had. And they are just doing what's done onto them. My mother would always say, I wanted you all to have better than what I had. And I wanted June and Melissa to have better than what I had.

My grandchildren are my priority. *At Parrish Christian* the classroom size is small, thirteen to fourteen *children*. Not to mention they were far ahead of the public school. They incorporated scripture, the Bible, into it. They are required to go to chapel every Monday. Dress for chapel. Involved in extracurricular activities, cheerleading and those kind of things. Melissa wanted to afford them the opportunity to be in an environment where they weren't distracted because of first one thing and another.

Melissa's Story

memories of school.

I enjoyed school. It was great times in my life. I loved high school and I tell people if I could just relive any part of my life again it would be high school. My mom trusted me, I had freedom. I had a car, a cell phone, a pager. And I was still working a part time job. I had really good, very supportive friends. She trusted me to go out. I was in honors chorus where we performed around the country and it was a marvelous experience. I had no care in the world. I knew where I wanted to go to *college*, I had gotten accepted, I had a great dynamic with my counselors.

Elementary school at Sampson Hill was very comfortable for me. It was a rowdy environment but it wasn't out of order. I knew everyone by name. The teachers were very much involved in what you were doing. It was very hands on and at that time they were still using rulers for discipline like paddling her hand type stuff. Even when I was in the after school program the people that were there were not just vested in working there to get a paycheck. I remember having my fourth grade teacher who brought me in, Ms. Williams. She *would take* in young girls to cultivate them and spend time with them, like a big sister. She actually let us sleep over, she ordered pizza and snacks and she actually did a debutante type program for young girls where she was my sponsor.

There was a completely different dynamic between the teachers that I had at Sampson Hill than the teacher I had at East Parrish. From just being very caring and very nurturing and not looking at you as the student, but as this little girl, and looking at me and treating me as if I was their child or family member. If I was out of line, "You want me to call your mama and tell her what you doin?" Like in a way that I knew that they meant

business. They could say that to me in a way that it was more like an aunt versus a teacher. I did not have that at East Parrish. It was fine, but did she bring me in and give me that closeness? No. But it may have just been her.

family involvement.

My mom set the example. After my mom and dad divorced she came this way and picked up her books and went back to school. I don't necessarily recall her graduation day but I remember seeing pictures of her upon graduation. When it comes to my job or when it comes to school those are just things that you just didn't play with, you just knew. My mom's expectations and value system for education was very high. It was never a threat. You just knew. When I was getting my undergrad degree she was getting her Master's. So the expectation was there that you will do better. I always knew to respect my teachers because my mom was always there and if I cut up, I might as well just cut up directly to my mom instead of cutting up to my teacher. I think that when I saw her involved in every single thing that was doing, I mean every single thing, then the expectation was, well if I don't do this she'll find out.

Back when my mom was in school, it was family, school, and church. I think in the traditional African American community, *it was common for* the teacher to have taught your mom and your dad and your grandma, so they knew about your family. They knew your parents. So they had expectations of what you should be able to do because they helped to plant that seed in those that bore you. Their teachers disciplined very strong, straightforward, and stern. But they also cared. If you did something wrong, they would spank you in school and then tell your mom that they spanked you and then you would get another one when you got home! But then they were the same people that you saw in your

church, they were the same people that you saw in your community, at your store, so they were really engrained in that place. *It's not like that*, not now.

I think the teachers at Sampson Elementary knew what they were dealing with in knowing that they were having children that were coming from not the best economical backgrounds or situations, and so they weren't scared to go into the housing project, they weren't afraid to say, "I'll take you home, it's dark." *I think* that my class growing up may have been the last branch of that tree where that area of responsibility continued to carry through. So that has broken. Before it may have been the teacher and the parent, you know the school and the families really working together to figure out the best interest of their child, whereas now it's like well this is my child and you can't tell me what to do. A more of a defensive stance, versus a more collaborative.

It's different at Parrish Christian Academy. Because it's is a church first and then a school there's a lot of relationships that are already established through church membership that come into the school. Because it's faith based the foundation may be a bit stronger. And so your perspective is supposedly different in how you build relationships, and this core belief in God is supposed to make your relationships better because your operating in love and in faith and not in worldly things.

Whether it was through church or a community organization *my mom was involved*, so it's funny when I found myself doing the same thing. *The way I'm involved, I definitely see my mom in that.* But I struggle finding a balance maintaining what I need to do at work and when it's ok to break that and go to *my children's* school. I'm on the board for the basketball association which means I do a lot of volunteering, spending a lot of hours

there. I'm gonna figure out how to help Isaiah help me work, so he can see that this is not free.

In another example, last year we had a snow day and they decided to put the snow make up day on the Martin Luther King holiday, which infuriated a lot of families because out of all the days to pick, they picked this one day! So, I and a couple other families were very vocal about not liking that at all. I wrote a letter and spoke to his teacher and I'm pretty sure that all those messages got back to the faculty which is why they sent out the emails to apologize. But that didn't sit well.

intergenerational investment.

As crazy as it sounds, *it feels like my life* kind of started with my children. I really realized life and death after I gave birth to Maya. It's just something about this being coming out of your body--it was an awakening. The rose colored glasses I had on before them were completely removed. Because it was just, this person was born, this person will also die.

I want the best education for my kids. Public school was never an option for my kids. We did look at a charter school, Columbus Charter. Both Parrish Christian and Columbus have very small class sizes, very good teachers who invest in the kids, and of course the athletic and extra-curricular components. Columbus offered things to do outside the classroom and the prospect of the program growing. So once they got there they wouldn't have to leave until the graduated high school. If I could get them in a good school where they would be safe and get what they need and not have to pay, that would be a huge bonus.

Maya's Story

I like to read. Don't really like math or spelling, those are the two things that I lack at. I like history. The best field trip we've been on was going to Monticello. Just knowing that me and Thomas Jefferson had a lot in common. We both love to read, we both like, well, he loved to write, I like to write but not as much as he did. And his friends used to ask him, "Why are you reading when you could be doing this and that," and he was like, "Because reading is fun!" And that's what my friend always asks me, why am I reading a book during recess, and I'm like, "Reading is fun!"

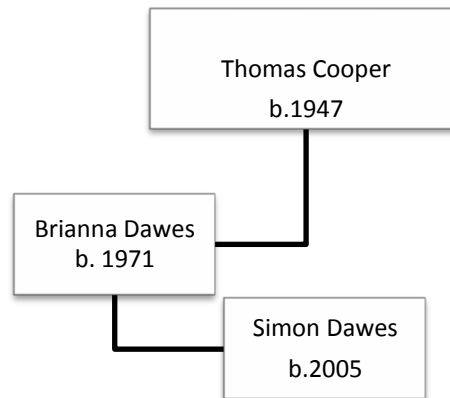
I was just reading a book about a one room schoolhouse and I was like, "My grandma was in that, she was in a one room school house." *I wondered, "Were the desks too small, too tall, was it was really hot in there? Was it really annoying to hear the first grade students doing phonics while you're trying to take a test?"* All I could imagine was that it was a brick building, it was really small and there wasn't a lot of room. Up to one hundred kids 'cause that's how much a one room school house could hold. I woulda said, "Mama, do I have to go to school this year? Can't we wait until we get a bigger house or something like that?"

It's really different from my school. We have the bigger classroom in the school. Lots of room. I think we were learning similar things, but in a different time period. Because when we read Chronicles of Narnia in 3rd grade my mom read that when she was in middle school. So learning the same things, just different techniques and different age groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Be More Than What I Am": Cooper Family Narratives³

Figure 4. Cooper Family Tree



Moving Up Through Moving Toward

Thomas Cooper's Story

childhood home.

I grew up in a community here in Parrish City that was called Coopertown.

Coopertown was named after my cousin, John Cooper. *It was* my mom and dad and brothers and sisters, which was twelve of us. I was the seventh child. And the seventh child, they said that's the chosen child. That the child would be a minister. But I never did become the minister. But I've sung with gospel groups, we used to travel the East Coast. And my dad used to sing gospel. So it was most of the boys, we sung different places go to different churches and different service centers to sing. The girls they would do most of the cooking and the boys, we would go out and do the yard work and that kind of thing.

³ The italicized words refer to words that I have added to the participants' stories for the sake of clarity. Most often these words have been paraphrased from participants' originally transcripts.

The neighborhood was beautiful at that particular time. Everybody knew everybody in the neighborhood. There was two churches there in the neighborhood. *Some people went to one church and some the other.* Everybody knew everybody. Some of them, I guess, that we didn't get along with, I guess that's in every neighborhood. We just happen to be one of those families that had accomplished more than the other families, so there was a little separation there between the families.

But there was a community of where we all would mingle together. A lot of people outside, playin' basketball, shooting marbles. The girls mostly jumped hopscotch, that kind of thing. Track running, football, basketball. We had a area that we would go and dance *at* this place we called the community shop. Everyone would go there and have fun and we would have to home around 11pm. I mean, it was nice growing up in that neighborhood. Oh, the neighborhood was beautiful. Mostly houses. There were no apartments, no duplexes apartments or anything like that. Was nice growing up in that neighborhood. I think that the family as a whole had been blessed so much.

Mom would go downtown and buy us clothes and I had two pairs of jeans that I wore to school. I would bring those jeans and I would wash those jeans and hung them out to dry. Then I would iron those jeans and wear them back to school the next day. I could remember that. *Our economic status* was a little over medium, I would say. Folks in the neighborhood? Most of them there was pretty good. Everybody had jobs and everybody went to work. Came home and cooked and whatever. It didn't mean all that much after work. My daddy worked in this box factory and my mom worked at a tobacco factory. No teachers in my community because the teachers seemed like they was in a different area from the other people.

from one urban neighborhood to another.

I left home when I was eighteen. The neighborhood was good at that particular time, but when I saw that the neighborhood was shifted to different people coming in, I don't even know the people, but when it shifted it looked bad. Oh my god! It has changed so much. All kinds of people. I go there now and I see people I don't even know. Seems like the neighborhood is run down now. Houses just seem like they are demolished or something. It's not kept up like it was when we were staying in that neighborhood. It doesn't look all that good to me. It seems like the people that could afford those houses-- seem like people now is in more of a struggle of keeping the neighborhood together. I don't know why that is, I don't know. Maybe the younger generation not getting jobs like they supposed to. I don't know. Things have changed so much.

Let's back up. When I got married to Mary, we stayed with her mother about four months which was in *the neighboring country town called Waynesville*. And then we moved from there to Frederick Street, stayed there for thirteen years. Oh my God, Frederick Street, that was an upgrade! Close by to the *HBCU* and our girls had a very good upbringing. A very nice apartment, duplex apartment. Now, Frederick Street has changed a lot because the *HBCU* has taken most of those houses now and turned them down, building new houses in the area for business I suppose.

urban to suburban.

So after thirteen years, we saved money and then we moved into a house, a nice four bedroom home over there on Wheatfield Ave. It was very, very nice there. That's where all the teachers and all the lawyers and people in that area, was doing very good. Wheatfield, that's still beautiful. That's a nice area. Real nice, neat, clean. Uptown. Real

good. Then from Wheatfield we moved to this home. And that's where we've been, that's where we are.

We sit around and talk about the old times sometimes. My girls they think that is funny. They laugh and say, "Wow Dad you was very, very poverty stricken." I would say, "No, I was doing just fine. Everything was good." That's what I thought. Everything was good. I was fine, I had no problems with that.

Brianna's Story

childhood home.

I grew up on Frederick street. It's right there at the HBCU, by the parking lot. 'Cause it was the HBCU, student union, the parking lot, and then our apartment, which was like a duplex. We played in the parking lot a lot. And if we went out our back door it was a child, she was probably a senior in high school and then if you went out our front door to the right it was a person that was a senior in the high school as well, and then my sister and I. So two older kids right next door. If you went out the duplex and to the left, it was an older couple that we kind of considered like grandparents. We would do things for them, like get the newspaper or wash the car. But the neighborhood other than those two kids next door was older people. There was a lady down the street who was a teacher. Was not a lot of kids in the neighborhood. But I felt like it was a safe neighborhood and in order to ride the school bus we had to walk down the street and go over two streets to another neighborhood and that's where more kids were.

It was not middle class, maybe a little bit lower than middle class--working class is probably good. And most of the people there did work, except for the people that were retired I guess, the older folks. My parents worked. It's not like we had a whole lot of

money, but they worked and we had what we needed. And I think that's the most of the people around, everybody worked every day they got what they needed, but I don't think it was a lot of extra. We had a living room, kitchen, bathroom, and two bedrooms. And it was small it was just the four of us, it was small but it was nice. I think because of the size of the apartment, it helped us to be even closer. And that's where we grew up until I was ten.

Since *we moved*, I had not been back to see anybody, but it kind of looks the same. I'm sure some of the same type of older people are in that neighborhood. I'm sure some of those people who was there no longer live there, but it seems like that neighborhood attracts the older crowd for some reason. That's just my opinion.

from urban to suburban.

When we moved to Wheatfield Ave., we moved to a house. 'Cause *on Frederick Street* we lived in a two bedroom apartment, my sister and I shared a bedroom until I was ten and she was eleven or twelve. So when we moved into a house, that was so exciting! I had my own room, my sister had her own room and there was a friend that lived in the house *nearby*. *And I didn't have to switch schools*. Because my parents took us and picked us up so we wouldn't have to change schools. To move into a house that was a big thing.

We were renting the house, but it was great, to be able to move into a house over on Wheatfield Ave. When we moved there I kind of felt like we were doing better or moving up. You know, like the Jefferson's-- moving on up? Both my parents were nurses and nurses I guess did okay. But I don't think that they got a big raise or something. I don't know how we were able to go from a two bedroom apartment to a four bedroom house *where* I can have my own bedroom. That was great. That was great.

stories of elders.

Grandma Pearl, she talks a lot about how when she was growing up they had to work so hard in the fields or in the gardens or whatever, to pick the food to do whatever they had to do with the horses or the cows. They have a farm, I even drove a tractor out there one day when I was like twelve, that's when her father was still living. Papa, that's what we called him. And he lived to be like 103.

My grandmother Pearl, kept houses. She didn't finish high school. I think one time she worked at an inn in Waynesville. They called it an inn back then, I guess. But she cleaned rooms and she would tell *me that* she made something like fifty something a week. Papa raised the farm. There have been times that we went out there to actually see him on the tractor. I've driven the tractor before. To see him feeding pigs, which was good.

Grandma Pearl talks a lot about the hard work that she had to do, even as a child, and she had to drop out of school. But even when she got married, she worked hard as a maid and she made less than a dollar a week. I'm like, "Wow." She was born in 1919. So, ya know, a long, long time ago.

Moving Up Through Staying Away

Thomas Cooper's Story

staying away from trouble.

Let's start back with my grandmother. My dad, his mother was named Milly Cooper. My dad was from Mooresville, *about sixty miles away from Parrish City*. That *was* where most of the Ku Klux Klan was brought up. See, my dad taught us not to hate them like they hate us, and I still don't see how that was happening. But, I know when

someone don't like this *and that*, so we was taught to get away from that. I just didn't get involved with a lot of people.

My parents worked at the factories. I was brought up in a family that was doing well. I mean, we was one of the families in the community that was doing very, very well. And that particular time they were paid pretty good. Some families were not getting the type of money that my mom and dad was making. I don't know why that was, but that was nice. We was separated from a lot of people. Black people, that we was not to get involved with. We just happen to be one of those families that had accomplished more than the other families, so there was, some like a little separation there between the families.

Growing up, I'd heard of the historic Greenpoint community. I've heard that those folks used to do very well there. But, I didn't like Greenpoint. No, I didn't like the Greenpoint community because it seemed like they were more of a people that was standing around the corners, drinking wine, and just looked bad in some areas. That's *where the* Downtown Theatre was and where the black people had to sit up stairs and white people sit downstairs and all this stuff; it was segregated. But anyway, Mom and Dad didn't want me to go there. We was not allowed to go that far from the neighborhood that I grew up. That was a different setting from what we had. There was some people that we thought that would hurt us or something. I mean we stayed away, that's what we thought. I don't know. *At that time, it* seemed like it was starting to go down. I don't know why. I don't know too much about that area.

My daughters, Brianna and Gwen, I always told them, enjoy your brain and be a kid, ya know, have fun. But stay out of trouble. I think that they kept out of the circles of some and were in the circles *of others* and like I always told Gwen and Brianna, "I guess

you got to get a fill of the bad and the good." And I think my girls had done so well.

Sometimes it's hard to stay out of trouble, but I suppose when you see trouble coming just leave. Just go, go away. Stay away from it.

staying away from politics.

My family very much wanted desegregation to happen. Being segregated, we didn't believe segregation was the thing to do. I think that when God created people, we thought that everybody should be together. I still don't understand how we was departed, the Black and whites from each other. But we were the type of family that we didn't believe in a lot of this stuff. What these other people were saying about inter-race. Everything they talked about it was bad. About you and me. The white and the black. It was always something going on. But we always stayed on this side of the track...you heard that before? The white was on this side and the blacks was on this side and the train would come right down the middle of the track.

My mom, she felt comfortable everywhere. We had this store downtown, Smith's Drugstore. My mom could go in, sit down, eat. Because they liked my mom. But I couldn't do it. They didn't like me. They wouldn't let me sit down beside my mom to eat and I remember telling Mom, "If I can't eat than you can't eat." Black people couldn't go in there. *My mom was an exception.*

And my dad was the same way. I remember dad, he could go places. He had, it was four white guys and two black guys. They used to trade dogs and my dad he had about forty dogs. And they used to trade these dogs and go hunting and all this stuff. We used to swim in some mud hole we called it, a pool where we would swim nude, black and white people. *Boys, girls nude, swimming.* But as far as going someplace, as we say uptown, a

place like that, no, we won't be there. But Mom and Dad could go there.

After Martin Luther King Jr. got assassinated, there was a riot or something in Parrish City. Oh my God. Those were some days! People was...kind of strange. They was fighting among each other or something. But we as a family, we stayed away from all that. What was going on. But it was a good thing that Martin Luther King, civil rights movement, and all that, that's good. That's what brought on the integration. And when it was integrated, that it was still bad. Everybody went to school together but we still can't get along. And I think some of that is going on now. Yeah, it's still going on. Me, I stay away. I do not get into anything that's not good.

Although, I was in some of those movements. I remember in downtown Parrish City, it was the HBCU football players, and all of us walked to the department store at that particular time. *Marching*, to integrate, so that people would be one regardless of skin being black, skin being white or whatever. The Ku Klux Klan was on this side, and the black people on this side. Fighting. They had baseball bats and I mean it was terrible. It was a bloody. It was a riot going on. It was a fight. I felt good, *to be part of that*. I was glad we all could come together, but it's still a fight baby. It's still a fight. It's still a fight. That's what the fight is all about now. That's the reason why that black people and white people are divided. It's because of the KKK. And the Black Panthers and those groups of people. It's always gonna be a fight, I guess.

When I was working at Forrester University, I remember a man, he was trying to get a union together there. But Forrester University didn't want a union there at that particular time. I saw one day some other guy was trying to hurt the man for picketing or walking or whatever he'd been doing, carrying the sign and all of that. It didn't affect me

because I was, I never been in the union. I was doing pretty good . So noooooo. no, no, no, *I wasn't involved in the picketing.* But oh yes, I was aware of it.

Do I talk to my daughters about these struggles? Yes, well sometimes. I got pictures now. I got tapes that I recorded of when Martin Luther King and all these guys was walking in Montgomery, Alabama, and how they would spray water on women and dogs would be biting them and this kind of stuff. But my daughters said, " Dad I don't want to see that. It's terrible." See, my dad taught us not to hate them like they hate us, and I still don't see how that was happening.

staying away from public schools.

What I see on the news about the public schools and private schools is that kids gonna be kids. And some of them gonna be hoodlums *and* some of them is not gonna get along with each other. So when you see trouble coming, go away. go. Don't get involved with that. *My* grandboys can get into trouble anywhere. But they have to be taught not to do these things, ya know. I think Brianna *and her husband* does a good job with those kids. I think they duplicate me. That's what it is. They stay out of trouble. Try to anyway. I can't speak for Brianna, but I think Brianna thinks like her dad in some way. That you can send your kid to a better place, a school for getting an education. And I think that's what her thinking is. That's the reason why those kids are there, so that they can have more in life.

Brianna's Story

staying away from trouble.

I don't recall getting in a lot of trouble. We kinda followed the rules pretty good. Ya know, little stuff when you're in high school, of course you gonna try things, but Mom and Daddy gave us a chance to share what was on our hearts and talk about how we felt

and, and most of the time we were up front with them about things. So we didn't get in a whole lot of trouble. I think the last time-- 'cause they used to whoop us--the last time that happened with me I was probably eight, so I learned!

Now at school, we never got in trouble at school. 'Cause we just knew. At school you better do what you're supposed to do. And we did what we were supposed to do in school. I don't remember getting in trouble in school at all. We knew we were there and we had a job to do. So, we didn't get in trouble in school at all.

staying away from politics.

I don't recall talking with family about any *boycotts or protests or sit ins that went on here in Parrish City*. My parents didn't talk a lot about it. I don't know if they were trying protect us from that or-- I don't know what the word might be. But they didn't talk a whole lot about it.

I remember there would be times that we would ride in the car, maybe going toward downtown and on the corners, on the corners they would have Muslim at the corners, preaching. Ya know, trying to get black folk to come together. And I always wondered, "Why do they have to stand on the corner and do that?" To me, that was, you don't see that as much now, but you would see them on the corners handing out papers and handing out pamphlets trying to get people to come join them. Standing on the corner asking folks to join them. And I just wondered why would they do that? Why do they need to stand on the corner and holler through a bull horn to get people to come to church or to come to a place to learn more about their heritage. We saw them, but we never went, because we had our own church.

Now I know that the historic Greenpoint Heritage Center, I don't know a whole lot

about that, but I know that they always have all the different programs . They do a whole lot of things down at the Heritage Center, but I don't even know the total background of Greenpoint. I don't, I don't.

staying away from public schools.

Honestly, I don't think that my experiences working in Parrish City Schools affected my decision not to send my kids there. I would send both of my boys to East Parrish Elementary, *where I work*, with me. I would. Because I feel that I had a public education and I turned out great. I feel that if we were able to get them into East Parrish, we would do it. I would be able to choose the teachers. They would do that *for me*. And that would be fine. We really chose to do outside of East Parrish Elementary because my husband really wanted them to not be under Mommy. And I had to agree with him with that. So we've been happy with the schools that we've chosen. But if they had to be at East Parrish, then they would.

Would they attend Smith Creek Elementary where they are zoned? No. They wouldn't attend Smith Creek. They wouldn't! Because if I work at East Parrish, then they would be at East Parrish with me or where they are now at Columbus Charter and Parrish Christian Academy. *Why?* I don't think I know anything that's so good or not about Smith Creek to where we would send them there. While I'm doing elementary counseling, I would send my child wherever I am. We decided on Columbus Charter and we're pleased with them. We're *also* pleased with Parrish Christian Academy. *My youngest son, Jalen,* will *leave Parrish Christian Academy and* be with Simon for first grade since he got in through the lottery. So that's great. Tuition free!

Moving up through Staying together

Thomas Cooper's Story

I spent most of my time with my brothers and sisters. We had friends, but we was a family that stayed away from a lot of people, because in that particular time there was so much going on. Can I be real with you? Because in the sixties there was segregation. A lot of blacks and white didn't get along. But we were the type of family that had white friends. *Our neighborhood*, it was all blacks. Not whites, not Mexicans, just Black people. I don't know why it was like that, but that's how it was. And the Black people didn't understand why my dad's friends would come, which were the white guys. We never had a problem with *the* color of anybody's skin. I would ask Mom and Dad why, "Why is it like this?" I never did understand why we, black and white people, didn't get along with each other. But, we were the type of family that got along with whoever. Inter-race of people. Because I was brought up like that. It was the white girls, the black girls, the black boys, the white boys, we all used to swim together, nude in a pond that was behind the house where we lived.

When I was going to school there was no integration. So I didn't go through a lot of things that other people went through that I heard. I can remember that my wife's brother, told me how he was there and how they used to fight and some people got killed at Waynesville County High. *I do remember at school* they would take some of the light skinned people and have them as cheerleaders. And the people that's darker, those people mostly didn't do anything. Ya know what I mean? *But* when I came out, I knew that things was going on but I thought that everything was okay. And for Brianna, everything went well for her with school integration. Everybody together having fun. I thought that all the

people had got together and there was no more struggling. So I can't tell you too much about that.

Looking back if I could integrate into a white school would I? I don't have no problem going to anybody's school. I'd walk right on in. It's been like that with me and it's still like that with me. I wouldn't have no problem, I don't care who's there. It could be a thousand white people there or a thousand whatever people and I'm the only black. Whatever, it doesn't bother me. I've been like that for years. I'm the type of guy, I've been through a lot of, what can I say, painful things in my life. I've worked hard. I get what I want. In order to get what you want, you gotta work for it, that's what I'm all about it. If I can get it, I'll walk right into whatever, white people, black people, whatever. I like taking control.

My wife said that we are a very close family and we enjoy each other's company and that we are truly blessed to have this. We realize that there aren't a whole lot of families like this. *And I agree.* I can say, I think that the family as a whole had been blessed so much. Staying out of trouble. Getting around with good people. In my life, and being with my wife and my daughters, has been just all positive. And there's been some negative in some point in time but we don't like being negative about stuff.

Brianna's Story

We grew up in a small house. I think *in* that small, intimate space you couldn't help but be close. *Mom and Daddy* made sure we was treating each other good. And I think we are close, we're still just as close today as we were back then growing up. And I'm glad about that because it was just the four of us. And I think we all pretty tight. We get upset with each other just like any family but we love each other. *There aren't many families like*

this. Especially Black families. And not just the Cooper family, but the extended family as well. We all worked together and get along together which is a blessing. I think we support each other pretty good.

But we grew up in a neighborhood where the general race was Black, African American. I know I had a few friends who may have been Caucasian or white, but not a lot of friends. I think it was mostly people like me. I don't recall a lot of Hispanic families. I know that right across the street from Sampson Hill Elementary there was a housing complex, we called it the projects back then. Ya know, most of the families that lived in the projects came to Sampson. Right across the street. So that was probably mostly black.

*I can't remember any experiences with racism! I don't. I don't. I'm sure there is probably something. But nothing stands out to where that I was ever uncomfortable or felt threatened by anything or anybody. Maybe it was because of where we lived. I think that made a difference. Cause we lived over by the HBCU and that area is mostly Black folk, ya know. And then when we moved to Wheatfield Ave. and that's most of the same. In high school it seemed more like Hispanic people started to come. But it was mostly blacks and Hispanics at high school. One white girl and she just fit right in. But we didn't have any issues. You made me think, now. If it was the way it was supposed to be (*desegregated*), then why was she the only white girl there? I don't think I had a feeling or opinion about it all *at the time*. Not saying it was not going on, but I can't remember. Nothing would stand out to make me make me think or feel like something was wrong. Everything was cool as far as I knew.*

Do I remember talking with my family about desegregation or experiences with racism? If it was going on they didn't talk a lot about it. And I don't know if it was what

they were trying to make sure they protected us from it or--I don't know. I just can't recall us having conversations about racism or anything else. Of course things are gonna happen that's called life! But we try to find the positive, even if the things that are not so positive. So, I think we've done well together.

Now, as we got a little bit older, Daddy might would say about some things that happened to him. For example, I think one time while they were courting, my dad went to pick my mom up in Waynesville and he had a nice car, that's what he would consider, and he said the police man stopped him. He kept his cool, but then he was upset about it, that they chose to stop him. And he thinks it's because of the car that he had. He talks a little bit about the police men in Waynesville and how there were times he felt like he been treated differently. *When I heard the story*, I was kind of hurt because he was hurt. And because of some other situations *that* happened, he may have thought differently about white folk because of how something's that happened with him. But I think they tried to protect us from that. They didn't talk a whole lot about it. And Mama, she's always the calm one and the one who's, "It's alright, it's alright, don't worry about it."

Now, I can think back to when my husband and I were dating, we um, we were going to my grandmother's house in Waynesville and I don't think he was speeding, but the policeman came and he pulled us. And I said, I shouldn't have said anything, but I said something like, "He was not speeding!" Then the policeman immediately said, "Ma'am you're acting belligerent and I'll take you all in if I need to."

So then I felt kind of got a feeling of what Daddy was talking about. And he never did dwell on it, but there were times that I just felt like we've come so far from what the world's been though, but it was still alive...racism. And that a policeman who's supposed to

be there to protect and serve would just stop you for whatever reason.

Where Simon goes to school, it's pretty mixed. I think that it might be a third/third/third in his classroom. Which is good. Which is good. They try to keep a balance. He has had some black teachers and some white teachers. All of them are wonderful. Most of them are white folk. So that feels good to me that my boys can see that we're black but you have white people that can be good to you. And we never tried to make a difference. We never said anything that's negative toward any race.

Now, Simon, he has this thing about light skin and dark skin and I'm not sure where that's coming from. But he is recognizing it. I think that he likes the lighter people better. 'Cause he said, "I want to be light like this." or "I don't want to be dark like that." I know we've said before, "Simon you look like *grandma*," my mother in law. She has a lighter complexion. It's just complexion. It's just the skin. But he doesn't discriminate. He like the girls with light hair, Hispanic girl, white girl, black girl. Just be good to them. Just be good to the little girls!

Simon's Story

My experience at home is very wonderful because I get to spend time with my family and play games with Daddy and Mommy. Oh and my experience visiting family was very good because we have a family reunion *with* all of my cousins. I have a lot of cousins and we come and play and have a good time.

Moving up through Representation

Thomas Cooper's Story

Back in those days when I was going to school, you want to stay out of trouble. If you got into trouble, some other authority is gonna pull you on the side and say, "Hey you,

do better!" You gotta stay outta trouble or someone's gonna spank you. Ya know, that's what they did back in those days. They did what's called abuse. Whip you. She would hit us on our buttocks. A little something. They called it discipline, but it worked at that particular time. Doing it that way, people stayed out of trouble.

When I was a kid, we was separated from a lot of people. Black people, that we was not to get involved with. Because of some learning, the way of speaking. We didn't like a lot of slang words. A lot of words that black people can use that white people doesn't understand what we saying, so we didn't want that to happen with my family. We were bringing up our daughters that way, we didn't like all these slang words, "niggers" and "honkeys." They called the white people "honkeys" and all this stuff. But I never would with these kids upbringing, we never used that word. Because it was a terrible, terrible word that if you say something like that people would fight. I mean just crazy back in the sixties. That's when the segregation and all that fighting was going on.

But we stay busy. Staying busy, staying out of trouble. Getting around with good people. Like my wife, Mary, she has this organization of twenty five professional women and they all positive women. It's a nonprofit organization where they send all these kids to college. It's a good thing. In my life, and being with my wife and my daughters, has been all positive. And there's been some negative in some point in time but we don't like being negative about stuff.

As far as this generation is concerned, there are different trends that come about and some I don't like. I like old school. I don't like to see anybody wearing jeans that has holes in 'em and with the pants hanging below their buttocks. Because I wasn't brought up like that. *If my grandboys came home dressed like that,* I think would have a problem with

him but he would respect you. I don't think that his pants would be hanging down too far. He would pull those pants up before he got home to me! It's very embarrassing to see guys that doesn't have respect for his elders, dressing like that. That's the way the kids are nowadays. But I don't think that Brianna's boys are gonna wear anything like them, because when they come here everything look nice, the kids does not wear them pants like that. I don't think Brianna would bring those kids here if they are not looking nice. *And would they be allowed to wear that to school?* No, no, no, no. no. no. no. I hate that with a passion, I'm telling you!

Brianna's Story

We followed the rules pretty good. Ya know little stuff when you're in high school, of course you gonna try things, but, Mom and Daddy gave us a chance to share what was on our hearts and talk about how we felt and, and most of the time we were up front with them about things. Growing up there were times that I used to be one that would talk back, so I got popped 'cause of my mouth talking back, and I see that now because of my youngest son. God bless, I wouldn't pop him too bad.

Mom and Dad encouraged us and it sticks with me now to be good to people. When I am working with the kids that's something I tell them, "If you don't remember nothing about Ms. Dawes is that you gotta treat people good." I tell my son, "You see how long Grandma Pearl has lived, its cause she been good to people. And if you want to say around for a while, you gotta be good." Folks gotta be good to God, gotta be good to God first.

Moving up through education and intergenerational investment

Thomas Cooper's story:

memories of school

When I was in school we had to ride the bus six or seven miles *to get there*.

Elementary School was about twelve miles from my home. *I remember my seventh grade teacher, her name was Mae Brown. Let's say it like this, I was the pet. She really liked me. She took me home and she bought me clothes and I drove her car, and I would clean her house and raked the leaves. I had a wonderful upbringing. Of course, Mae Brown's husband was the Dean of the HBCU. So, he took me in as his son. At East Parrish High, Ms. Henderson, I think she was the meanest one I'd say. Let's say it like that. Because she was very strict. You must get your work done, get your homework, and they would teach you how to go in front of the class to present the presentation of something like that. You couldn't filibuster. You have to learn that particular chapter and then you come back and stand in front of the class and present what you read that night.*

In school we learned our history. United States history. That's what most of what was in the history that was taught to us was Black history. It was not too much about what the other race was doing, because those books, we had books that we learned about what was happening on the other side, but we were mostly talking about Black people. What we were doing. Our history. That's what it was. It was nothing to talk about, the white people was doing their thing and we was doing our thing, so it was segregated.

I was really big time at East Parrish High. I think that's how Brianna got that job at East Parrish Elementary, because I was very popular at that school. I was captain of the football team. *I was* president of *the* senior class. I should have gone to college because I

had eight football scholarships. I did play semi-pro *for a bit, though*. I didn't want to go to *college* because I wanted to go to some school where I could just go two years or something like that. Some small school. I needed the money. I needed the money. And so I went to work at Forrester University Medical Center and that's what happened. I had most of my learning there at Forrester.

family involvement.

It was my mom and dad's strictly rule that we must go to church. You got school five days a week and on the weekends you do your yard work, go shopping downtown, *and on Sundays we go to church and* we stayed in the church all day. We were mostly a Christian family. We believed in going to church. We were brought up that way. My dad, he was a Gospel singer. He sang with four guys. And being the seventh son of that family, I took that on. And as of today I'm still singing Gospel. I think it kept me out of trouble. And the whole family, all of my brothers sing Gospel music. I think that my family has kept it positive and mingling with all people of all races. I used to tour along the East Coast. Let me *sing some* for you: "I once was in the sunlight of the all mighty, mighty, mighty love. One day I fell to the nightlight of sin... I thank him in the morning, thank him in the noon time, thank him in the evening, thank in the-the, mid- the mid- the middle of the night."

My mom worked at the factory, dad worked at the box factory. My oldest brother was working, they'd bring money in, so we just took all that money and shared it together. My daddy, I never seen him drink. He was a Christian man. I just duplicated my daddy, *especially* in song. I never seen such a bad time in my life to think of it, I don't know. They may have struggled through something, but the struggle was good. I don't know what it

was for them.

My parents' relationship with the school was very good. They went to PTA meetings. They did everything to help me and the kids get through school. I believe that my parents believe that in order for me to do good, that they has to be there for us to stay in school. *If we got in trouble*, mom and dad is not gonna take off work to come see what was going on with me, because if there is anything going on with me in school its gonna be talked about once I got home and i don't think that'll be good. So I try to stay out of that.

As for my daughters, it was my strictly rule that my daughters get their education. I would go to PTA meetings and meet the teacher. They are very sweet girls. They kept busy. They would come home and get their homework out. The only problem I had with them is when the little boys start coming around! I remember one time, my oldest daughter, she went to school one day and she raised her hand and she knew the answer but the teacher did not call on her, so she came home from school that day, and said, " Dad, I knew the answer but the teacher wouldn't call on me." And I said, "Oh, I don't see anything wrong with that, that's okay." But come to find out who that teacher was-- Marian Simmons-- and we used to sing together! And this girl just happened to be Gwen's teacher! Once Marian found out that she was my daughter, everything changed.

Brianna was a leader. I think it all started when I was pretty big with this major product distribution organization. I used to take this girl with me anytime I did a presentation for this business, and with them being with me, I think that's what caused them to be more positive about things. How to speak well and that kind of thing. How to be flexible. How to listen and learn from what other people are telling you. Some of the stuff they telling them might not be good, you just need to pick out what's good and leave

the rest alone.

Gwen and Brianna were cheerleaders in high school. Then they wanted to join the band, they needed some instruments, I bought them a trumpet and bought the other one an alto sax, option to buy! Just in case they didn't want to attend the band anymore. I think they still has those horns. And after that they all went to college. So things been good. Things been good with the family. Seems like everyone in the family is working. I think the family is very blessed right now. We thank God for that. *We did go* through a struggle in order to get things good. I've struggled, my wife and I. But Gwen and Brianna, they don't know anything about what I went through. Everything is all good with those girls. They, don't even cut grass. But, I think that this is something with everybody. Trying to be somebody.

When I talk to my grandkids, I get all four of them together, because I'm busy. I can't talk to those kids one at a time. I have to get all four of them together. We went to the state fair and we had fun. I asked them how they're doing in school and stuff like that. *I told them*, if you continue to do your homework and continue to do well in school, Granddad will do whatever need to be done. One of the girls called me the other night and said, "Granddaddy, I made all A's, but I made one B." I said, "You gotta do something about that B."

intergenerational investment.

I don't think that Mom and Dad finished high school, but they went as far as the eighth grade, but it was enough that they could communicate with people. It was good, they knew math well. *You* see, back in that time, they had to leave school to take care of their houses. There weren't too many black people going to college then, although I

remember the HBCU being there a long time. I remember *this one time*, when dad was working at his cement business and I worked there after school to make a little money, you know, to buy my clothes and that kind of thing. But I remember Dad telling me, "Son, this work is not for you. It's too hard. I mean lifting all this cement and stuff, putting it on the truck and that kind of stuff." So, I left. Once I left that's when I started working at Forrester Medical Center.

So then we gonna work hard and send these kids to college. My first daughter, Gwen, I think she started working at the medical center food service. And Brianna, she got a job working at McDonald's at fifteen years of age. They are the type of kids that always been a go-getter. They mostly they depend on Mom and Dad to help them out but they was kids that went out and did what they had to do. My God, parents love to see their daughters do better than we. Brianna has accomplished her goal in life of education. I guess she could do more, I think her say that she would like to go back. She already has a masters and I don't know what else she want to do!

I want my kids, my grandkids, to be more than what I am. I want those grandkids to continue to do well in school, respect their elders, behave. Do good. Be kids, be teenagers, grow up, and be what you want to be. That's what I talk to my kids about. But be kids, have fun, and obey.

Brianna's Story

memories of school.

I was the kind of student who made good grades. But I had to study to get 'em. *I remember my favorite teacher from fourth grade, Ellie Simpson.* If I saw her today she would know me and I'd know her. She was just won-der-full! I was the class pet. She was a

good teacher. I loved her. She made multiplication so fun, it was so easy for us to learn because just the way she taught. It seems like when I left there and if it was three or four years later, she remembered me and even as an adult she remembers me.

When we were in elementary school, we would leave school and go, go right up the hill to the library, [*one of the first Black libraries in the state located near the Historically Black College*], and that's where we stayed after school and did our homework. There is one little librarian there named Ms. Harper, who was a white lady. And she was absolutely wonderful to us. Because we were there, we was reading all the time. She was encouraging us and my parents were encouraging us to read. Read, read, read. So that kind of said to me that school is important and reading is important. And so we did what was asked of us. Ms. Harper, like I said, she always treated us-- she never treated us differently. And the kids that were coming up to the library were all little black kids. And she was the white librarian who loved us. She even loved us so much to the point that she helped my sister and I plan a surprise party for my mama. And she came to the house and helped us get it together. Ya know what I'm saying? So, my experience with people that don't look like me have been good. And I'm just, I'm just glad. I really am.

family involvement

My parents came to the school and it seemed like most of the time. If both of them couldn't be there, then one of them would be there. I could never remember a time when I'm sitting there wanting Mom or Dad to be there. They were there. *But* we spent a lot of time with dad because mama worked a lot of nights, as a nurse. Both of them *are* nurses but Daddy worked like the first shift and Mama would go to work at like 3:30pm and get off at 11pm. But when there were parent teacher conferences, both of them would try to

go, but it would be *mostly* Daddy who went. And it would be Daddy at home getting dinner, making sure we got the baths and stuff like that, even though mama would cook before she left. Daddy was kind of like mama would be at home. Ya know, normally Mama's the ones who is always, in most families---Mama did a lot, don't get me wrong, but when *she* worked second shift that left daddy to be Mama. He had a dual role at that time. *I'm thankful* for everything that *he* did when we was growing up, and everything *he* do now. I know he says he works a lot now, and he loves job. Well he always work a lot, and he says he don't have as much time as he would like to have for the family, but *I'm thankful* for every chance *he* gets to be with us.

Also, growing up Mom and Dad always had business meetings to go to *when they worked for this product distribution company*. But it was good for us because we got to meet a whole lot of people. We got to travel, we just met all of the kids. *And Daddy used to perform Gospel and we would go see him*. Oh, I was proud. I was proud. Very much so. I could see that he enjoyed it *and* they sounded good. We heard gospel music all the time *growing up*, all the time. Because Daddy was singing and when he was not singing he was playing something like, like the O'Jays. We liked the gospel and the R&B music. Remember the 8-track? Still to this day my daddy has an 8-track player in the garage at the house and I remember when we were younger we used to go into the garage and dance. We used to dance together.

There's always been education though. *With my sons*, I just try to share with them about schooling and I talk about my first day of kindergarten. I can still remember my kindergarten teacher and who would have thought after forty one years you could still remember your kindergarten teacher, and how she really started me off on the right foot,

ya know? We're talking to Simon a lot about when we were in school, we did what the teacher asked us to do, we listened. Because that's what Mom and Dad expected. And that's the same thing we expect for you to do is to listen, stay focused, and do what you need to do in school cause your education is what's most important. We've gotten plenty of time to do football and all this other stuff, because they love sports, but you gotta get your books. Because if you don't get your books you can't go far. So we've been trying to put that into their minds now at a young age.

Family involvement in schools today is different from when I was growing up. I'm not sure what has changed so much, but the parents are not there. The parents are not there. The ones who come are the ones who, well, "the good ones." Their kids are fine, we're glad you're all coming but the ones you really need to come in there, they don't show up. Maybe that was happening when I was younger, but I didn't notice it because my parents were there. And I'm glad that they were there. So we're making sure that we're there when our kids have things at school that they are involved in. But I think we do what we can to make the school welcoming and to invite the parents in, but, I don't know, we missing something. We missing something. I just can't figure out what it is; we feed you, we have your kids participating, kids teaching you something that will help get a few more in but, a lot of parents haven't been there at all this year. And sometimes the kids come to me--it's heartbreaking when a fifth grader graduates and they stand around and nobody's there to see 'em. Wow. But I'm glad my parents were there. And they still are.

intergenerational investment.

My grandmother, she had to drop out when she was in ninth grade because her mom passed away. She was the oldest child so she had to drop out of school to take care of

her brothers and sisters. She kind of had to take care of the house and everything else. So she didn't get her high school education diploma. My dad, I don't know why he chose not *go to college*. I know that he got his nursing thing at the local community college. I'm not sure why he didn't go on and continue with football. I think sometimes he wishes he would have taken it further, like maybe be pro or something. But *my parents* always instilled in us to make sure that we go to college. That's what they said. And I wouldn't dare say, "But you didn't!" Wouldn't dare say that. But they wanted us to do more than they did. And even Mom, when she went back that kind of showed us too--she went back to get her registered nurse license--so she could make a little more money. That showed me that if my mama can go back at an older age, then hey, I can definitely do it. I'm gonna do it. That's what we did.

So I try to tell *my sons* now that school is very important. School comes first. If you get your education you can do anything. It's the same thing my parents told me. The same thing I'm telling them. And I hope that they'll let their children know that too in the future. Just work hard, work hard, work hard. Treat people right. Treat people right and you'll go a long way. That's what I want to teach them.

Simon's Story

I really like school. There's nothing I don't like about school. I love to do math and stuff because I do it all the time with my friends *and* I get to use manipulatives. I also love specials and recess. My favorite special is P.E. and library. I also play piano. My mom helped me *learn and* my mom's co-worker, Ms. Kathryn, she helped me and I go there on Wednesdays *for lessons*. I got a keyboard for Christmas.

I *also* play basketball and baseball. We haven't lost a game yet. My granddaddy saw me play in the game he was pretty happy. I made a touchdown and he was like, "Wooooow!" My cousin recorded *the game* and then I listened to it and when *I made the touchdown, I heard Granddaddy say "There he goes! "* And I was running and running and got a touchdown. Did my granddaddy tell you that he was a football player like me? He told me a lot of times. He made a lot of touchdowns. *When he told me that he played sports too*, I was amazed. Really amazed that he loves sports too. *My granddaddy sings too*. I heard him sing before and I said, "You didn't tell me that you could sing!" I can sing too.

Sometimes my mom and dad tell me about when they were in school. They told me they went to the Historically Black College. My mom told me that she had a boyfriend, his name was James, and then James dumped her and then she saw my daddy. *I don't know much about when they were in elementary school*, I wasn't even made yet. But I know they had good grades. They worked hard in their classes, just like I did. I did third grade work on my exam, and I got *the highest score*. My teacher told my mom and she *said*, "Awesome man!" I said to *myself*, "Good job, good job, good job." And I was proud of myself. My dad gave me props for it, too.

I like to spend time with my grandfather. One special memory was when we had a steak with my cousins and my brother and it was so nice. We walked up the street and then when we got home we had ice cream and watched a movie and watched and played and ate popcorn with him. It was so nice.

CHAPTER SIX

Becoming Through Mobility: Intergenerational Pedagogy and Community Cultural Wealth

The Cooper and Jordan family stories reveal a narrative of "becoming through mobility" (Adey, 2006 p.79). Rather than understanding the families as navigating fixed institutions, economic positions, structures, and locations, they are moving through spaces that are in many ways fluid and impermanent. As Peter Adey (2006), scholar of geography writes, "Mobility...gains meaning through its embeddedness within societies, culture, politics, [and] histories. In terms of domination, then, movement may be an action of domination in one circumstance but it may be viewed as an action of resistance in another. Mobility, like power, is a relational thing" (p. 80). For the Cooper and Jordan families, their intergenerational pedagogies were acts of praxis, allowing them to move through neighborhoods, schools, communities, and institutions toward spaces that offered better opportunities for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren. If mobility is understood as relational, then the Cooper and Jordan narratives of becoming are contingent on the moments of friction that tug and push, moving them toward something and somewhere else.

In the previous two chapters, I re-presented the narratives of the Cooper and Jordan families, organized thematically, to convey the families' intergenerational pedagogical processes. Their stories speak to the larger narratives of schooling, education, race, and class in the United States. They contribute to the rich and complex counternarratives of

Black family experiences, and in particular, reveal how two families actively pursued social mobility through careful pedagogical moves, choices, and messages shared across generations. Their stories suggest that their segregated communities (both *de jure* and *de facto*) were in many ways locations of strength and possibilities. While the stories speak of the strong educational roots tilled by their families, teachers, and schools, these stories also provide a critique of the contemporary state of education, noting how the experiences of today's *de facto* segregated schools and communities are in contrast to the segregated schools of the past.

In this chapter, I address my interpretations of their stories, in particular, how their stories speak to and against the larger narratives and counter narratives of schooling, education, segregation, and desegregation. This analysis is threefold. First, I will discuss the narratives thematically, addressing the following themes of intergenerational family pedagogy and mobility: moving toward, staying away, staying together, representation, education and intergenerational investment. In explicating these themes, I will discuss the moments of friction that enabled or pushed the families to move as well as note the continuities and discontinuities across generations. Next, I will use Yosso's (2004) theory of Community Cultural Wealth to interpret the various forms of capital employed by the Cooper and Jordan families. Finally, I will analyze the Cooper and Jordan narratives comparatively, addressing the commonalities and dissimilarities evident between the two families.

As you read these interpretations it's important to keep in mind that although these stories provide a zoom lens perspective of two African American families' experiences, they are only from one angle. Just as there are numerous ways to read and interpret their

narratives, there are also untold stories within each story. Perhaps their stories would be different if shared with another person, in another place, and another time. In a recent conversation with Professor Siddle Walker about the challenges to qualitative fieldwork, I expressed my concern about how my whiteness will shape my participants comfort in sharing their stories and hidden transcripts. Siddle Walker explained that while race is of course a factor, she too, as an African American woman, experiences challenges to this work. She shared that in her experience, the opportunities to discover her participants' stories were much like exploring an old, large house. At the first meeting, she may be lead to the foyer, followed by the living room and kitchen. And with each subsequent meeting the participant would introduce her to another "room" in their house of stories, each tucked further and further away. And just when she was finally welcomed into the dark small corner of the closet in the basement, she discovers a new door to a cellar that leads inevitably further. Siddle Walker's point here is that relationships with participants are important and they will give you the opportunity to explore many "rooms of their house" but these tours are always incomplete. In this dissertation, I acknowledge that the stories my participants shared were in many ways public transcripts. It was clear that a tension between our identities structured which and how the stories were shared. Scott (1990) differentiates between public and hidden transcripts as a way to make sense of the stories told and stories untold between the oppressed and the oppressor. He contends that stories shared by individuals belonging to a subordinate class will, "[A]ppeal to the expectations of the powerful" (p.2). He defines public transcripts as "The open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (p.2). Hidden transcripts, in contrast are "the discourse-gesture, speech, practices-that is ordinarily excluded from the public transcript.

The practice of domination, then, *creates* the hidden transcript" (p.27). Based on this theory, the stories participants shared in this study were most often public transcripts, but at times, may have sunk deeper to their hidden transcripts. I believe my participants were always cognizant that they were sharing their stories with an outsider, more specifically a researcher who may take their stories and shape them solely for her degree accreditation. This, of course, was not my intent, but I am mindful of the historically exploitive relationship between many research universities and communities of color. However, there may have been other times that we experienced an alliance against larger institutionalized oppressors, allowing for moments of hidden transcripts to emerge. Thus, the analysis to follow recognizes that their stories are incomplete, revealing only the chosen fragments while many others remain untold.

Thematic Analysis

The Cooper and Jordan family narratives reveal an intergenerational pedagogy shared across generations with the intention of providing opportunities for upward social and educational mobility for the next generation. In one participant's words, their stories reveal narratives of "movin' up." This movement was not solely across socio-economic brackets, but across educational levels, institutions, jobs, and neighborhoods. Their stories of mobility are not described with salaries or tax brackets but rather with the very local and embodied experiences of family life on the ground.

Moving Up Through Moving Toward

The first theme, *moving toward*, emerged as I noticed among their stories a pattern of movement across communities. As I mentioned earlier in this dissertation, I originally understood this theme as moving *away*. But after carefully attending to the meanings my

participants ascribed to their experiences, it was clear that often, especially in the case of leaving their childhood communities, they were not moving *away* but rather moving *toward*. This distinction is important because it resists the dominant tendency to name their original home as a place from which to *escape* (to use the language often applied in studies of mobility among families in poverty). For example, Sheryl Jordan's (G1) description of her life as a sharecropper emphasizes the strengths of growing up on the farm. When describing her mother's biscuits, their hard work in the field, and the peaceful darkness of the rural nighttime, her eyes would close as if momentarily visiting her childhood, Smithville home. Sheryl notes the distinction between poor by society's and by her own family's standards:

We were poor. We were farmers. Now, poor by society's standards. But by our standards we were very rich. We were wealthy. We never went without food, we never went without clothing. We never went without a whole lot of love from especially our mom. We worked the farm because that's what we knew to do. We didn't know we were poor. I didn't know anything about an allowance. Never had a need for money. Seriously. I know that sounds crazy but, where you gonna go to spend it?

For Sheryl, leaving Smithville for Parrish City was in many ways an upward move, but it was moving *toward* some other opportunity, rather than moving *away*. Similarly, Thomas Cooper describes his childhood home and community as comfortable, playful spaces:

There was a community of where we all would mingle together. A lot of people outside, playin' basketball, shooting marbles. The girls mostly jumped hopscotch that kind of thing. Track running, football, basketball. We had an area that we would go and dance that this place we called the community shop... Oh, the neighborhood was beautiful.... Was nice growing up in that neighborhood. I think that the family as a whole had been blessed so much...Most of them there was pretty good. Everybody had jobs and everybody went to work. Came home and cooked and whatever. It didn't mean all that much after work. My daddy worked in this box factory and my mom

worked at a tobacco factory.

When Sheryl Jordan and Thomas Cooper go on to describe their move from one neighborhood to another, they reveal excitement about moving on, but they do not contrast the two worlds in such a way that suggests an *escape*. On the contrary, their children's perceptions of their parent's upbringing is in contrast to the meanings Thomas and Sheryl conveyed about their own childhoods. Growing up in a different time and place with different standards and expectations for comfort, Sheryl and Thomas's children and grandchildren distinguish their elders' upbringing in contrast to their own:

It's amazing, June and Melissa are of a different breed. They hate everything about the country. They don't even want to go out there to mow the grass. Not that they have to, but. You can see a transition. You can see where the buck stopped with me. When we go back to Smithville now there is nothing there. The fields where you lived is nothing. I'm pretty sure I've said to them that we used to live here, that there used to be a house here. But they can't visualize it because all they see now is an open field. So the, physical part is gone, but the memories are there, for me they're there. (Sheryl Jordan)

I know things were different back then. My grandma was the second oldest I think and she was up at five in the morning doing chores. I was like, OK, not really caring but OK. Because I wake up at six. *It makes me feel like I'm lazy.* Luckily I don't have to do chores. I don't really make up my bed because we normally stay here *grandma's house*, because mom has to work. (Maya Jordan)

We sit around and talk about the old times sometimes. My girls they think that is funny. They laugh and say "Wow dad you was very, very poverty stricken." I would say, "No, I was doing just fine. Everything was good." That's what I thought. Everything was good. I was fine. I had no problems with that. (Thomas Cooper)

The moves the Coopers and Jordans made as adults were intentional. Both families moved a number of times before settling into their suburban neighborhoods. For the Jordans, they were clear about the frictions which spurred them to move: crime, an assault, and changing demographics. While the Coopers don't describe their moves in the context

of friction or tensions, they portray them as upward moves, specifically noting the "upgrade" to a larger home and to a community where their neighbors are teachers and lawyers.

These stories of movement also vary across generations. One strong example is the difference in perspective among Sheryl Jordan and her daughter, Melissa, when explaining a catalyst for their moves across town. While Sheryl described noticing an increase in crime and a change in the neighborhood over time, Melissa described feeling "safe" in her neighborhood as well as in the neighboring low-income housing community where she spent most of her time playing. While noticing symbols that suggested a protective stance (such as the community construction of a large fence to separate their neighborhood from the housing project as well as her mother's use of a crutch propped up between the front door and stairwell beam), Melissa recognizes that she may not have really grasped what it meant to feel unsafe as a child:

At that age I don't think I could comprehend what was safe and what was not. I think initially you may have been concerned because a family member was hurt but I don't think it dawned on me what that meant until I walked downstairs one day and you saw a crutch propped against the front door and a stairwell beam so that the door couldn't be opened. Then you realized that something's different.

In another example both Sheryl and Melissa share a story of the impetus for their second move with subtle, but distinct differences. While Melissa describes the final impetus for their relocation as an individual coming to their door to sell air fresheners at eleven o'clock at night, her mother explains it differently:

The second thing that happened, I was home alone and the doorbell rang and I wasn't about to open that door, but I did go to the kitchen and I looked out and I could only see a shadow, but I could tell that that person was casing the area. It was just eerie. And I said no. No. So, I decided I need to go on now.

The theme of moving toward is an integral element of family intergenerational pedagogy. For the Cooper and Jordan families, navigating their neighborhood spaces in search of communities where they felt safe and proud was a response to the frictions and their forward gaze. Movement suggested possibilities and opportunities not just for themselves, but for their children and the generations not yet born.

Moving Up Through Staying Away

Among the messages passed down through the Cooper and Jordan intergenerational family pedagogy was the message encouraging their children to stay away from people, places, and situations that were perceived as "trouble." Related to another theme, *moving up through representation*, the families stay away from experiences that would reflect negatively on themselves or their families, and followed their elders' expectations to obey and "do what you need to do" in order to be successful. Specifically, participants noted staying away from groups of people, staying out of organized political movements, and with regard to the third generation, away from public schools.

Staying away from these elements of their community contributes to the families' larger strategy of moving up. This strategy separates themselves and their families from other members of the African American community whom they perceive to be trouble, a bad influence, or upwardly mobile. Of his family's distinction from other's in the community, Thomas writes:

My parents worked at the factories. I was brought up in a family that was doing well. I mean, we was one of the families in the community that was doing very, very well. And that particular time they were paid pretty good. Some families were not getting the type of money that my mom and dad was making. I don't know why that was, but that was nice. We was separated from a lot of people. Black people, that we was not to get involved with. We just happen to be one of those families that had accomplished more than the other

families, so there was, some like a little separation there between the families.

Thomas's family encouraged him stay away from neighborhoods and people who did not reflect the behaviors and attitudes of the social class in which his family identified. He goes on to explain how his family expected him to stay away from the Boyd Avenue community, a neighborhood that at one time was a thriving, self sufficient, Black business class community, but by the middle of the twentieth century had experienced economic decline.

We was not allowed to go that far from the neighborhood that I grew up. That [Greenpoint community] was a different setting from what we had. There was some people that we thought that would hurt us or something. I mean we stayed away.

Thomas similarly encouraged his own daughters to stay out of trouble. Brianna recalls how getting into trouble at home was rare, and at school she remarks, "You just knew. At school you better do what you're supposed to do." The Coopers perceived following the rules as a path toward educational and economic success.

Similar to obeying their elders' behavioral expectations, the Coopers' and Jordans' stories revealed how staying away from organized political movements was an intentional way of *not rocking the boat* in which they were cruising along. While there is a rich history of African American organizing across family generations and economic levels (Greene, 2005; Payne, 2007), the Cooper and Jordan families abstained from many elements of civil rights organizing. The elder generations articulated a clear belief, passed down from their parents, that integration among Blacks and whites and the desegregation of public schools was a positive advancement. Thomas, although participating in at least one rally, noted his discomfort with the tensions in his community, particularly after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

After Martin Luther King Jr. got assassinated, there was a riot or something in Parrish City. Oh my God, that was some days. Those were some days. People was---kind of strange. They was fighting among each other or something. But we as a family, we stayed away from all that. What was going on. But it was a good thing that Martin Luther king, civil rights movement and all that, that's good. That's what brought on the integration. And when it was integrated, that it was still bad. Everybody went to school together but we still can't get along. And I think some of that is going on now. Yeah, it's still going on. Me, I stay away. I do not get into anything that's not good.

Notwithstanding his stance on integration and civil rights, Thomas did not get involved in most local political organizing. When I asked him about political unrest and a strike regarding the workers inability to unionize at Forrester University where he worked, he recalled the tensions but stated with conviction that did not get involved because it did not affect him, as he was comfortable and treated well in his position of employment. Brianna's commentary on political involvement suggested limited exposure to conversations around integration and racial politics. She did recall seeing members of the Black Muslim community rallying on the street corner, encouraging folks to attend their place or worship to learn of their heritage. Brianna remembered neither understanding why they were doing so nor the relevance of exploring their heritage. From the stories Brianna and Thomas shared, it is unclear why they chose not to participate, but their stories suggest that the Cooper family value of staying away from trouble was believed to support their likelihood of success. Thus steering clear of political organizing may have been a method to avoid circumstances that were seen as polarizing among members of the white and Black community.

The Jordan family also abstained from involvement in political organizing, although their experiences differ from The Coopers. Growing up in a rural sharecropping community, Sheryl recalls living in an insular community and not having access to

television or newspapers that were venues for information regarding the civil rights movement and political struggle. She remembers witnessing protests at a local school and describes, both metaphorically and literally, remaining on the second floor of the building, watching the protests from her window and not understanding or agreeing with the tension.

There were black students who were trying to get enrolled or were enrolled at that the high school. And the elementary school, *where I worked*, was directly across the street from the high school. You could be on the second floor of the elementary school and look over at the high school and see clearly what was going on. I could see the crowds and the unrest and I can recall saying, "Why they doing that?" Can you hear me? I mean I was so out of it, I was not in touch. I was truly not in touch. Perhaps I thought it could be done a better way. I'm not making excuses for myself but whenever I saw unrest, I always felt there was a better way to get the outcome that you wanted than to have the big, large crowd and all of the noise and yelling back and forth. I don't apologize for that, I just believe I felt that it could have been handled a different way.

It wasn't until moving to Parrish City, that Sheryl learned of the complexities of the Black community's struggle for civil rights. Sheryl further recalled how she believed to benefit in the work force by being an educated, hard working Black female. Her story suggests that she did not want to jeopardize that by participating in the movements. She describes her moves and choices as "playing it well."

I think I was in denial. You see, I was always that one Black that was singled out and put in a different pedestal that everybody else was on. And I probably embraced that. And I probably wasn't going to do anything to not have that continue. It wasn't anything that I'd have to say. First of all, I was Black, I was female, half way educated, so I met, so I helped to meet quotas was the thing back in those days. Affirmative action and all that. So, I helped in that category. Black, female, we'll put her here. Token. I'm sorry that's just, when I look back on it now that's how I saw it, and I played it really well. I played it really well.

Likewise, Melissa Jordan chose not to get involved in what she described as "race riots" at her high school. Similar to her mom as well as the Cooper family's approach, she

did not feel she was directly impacted by the racial tensions as an extremely high achieving and successful student at the school. She explains:

I remember thinking at the time that I don't know if agree with that and I didn't feel the same. My mentality was I go to school, I do my work, I go to class I'm not trying to cause trouble and it may have been a "I am me" mentality. If you see the conflict walk away from it. If you know the dude you were angry with is down there, then why did you walk down there? I just didn't get the intent to cause trouble, 'cause you know it just takes that one punch to be thrown for it to escalate to a whole 'nother level... Looking back I don't regret anything that I did or didn't do. For me, if I am very passionate about it very headstrong about it I'm gonna give you 100%. If I'm not there yet then I won't. Because I want to make sure that I made the right decision. In my mind it was, "You were just fighting on the bus last week and now you are gonna do a sit in? Like, what's your MO?" But I don't look back at it negatively, because I loved high school and I tell people if I could just relive any part of my life again it would be high school.

However, Melissa has been vocal in other circumstances as parent when she believed something to be unfair. In one instance, Melissa describes her disappointment with her child's school, Parrish Christian Academy, when they scheduled their snow make-up day on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. In this situation, she felt strongly that her school acted inconsiderately and thus did not hesitate to amplify her voice:

Last year we had a snow day and they decided to put the snow make up day on the Martin Luther King holiday, which infuriated a lot of families because out of all the days to pick, they picked this one day! So, I and a couple other families were very vocal about not liking that at all. I wrote a letter and spoke to his teacher and I'm pretty sure that all those messages got back to the faculty which is why they sent out the emails to apologize. But that didn't sit well.

The Cooper and Jordan families decision not to engage in organized political protests speaks to the varied experiences of Black families in the south, across generations. While the master narratives of desegregation typically address resistance solely among the white community, counter narratives emerged that reveal a strong organizing tradition of resistance. However, the Coopers and Jordans fit neither of those narratives. Their nuanced

experiences reveal the vicissitudes and multiplicity of Black family life in the South. Their abstention from organized politics does not, however, imply that they were apolitical. Their decisions not to participate, with a clear focus on their personal and family goals, were indeed political moves.

Of the many choices embodied in intergenerational family pedagogy, one of the most important ones is the families' decision where to send their children to school. Both the first and second generations of the Cooper and Jordan families had positive experiences in their *de jure* and *de facto* segregated schools. However, the third generation of both families attends either charter or Christian schools. The memories of the elder generations' education as places of pride and achievement are positioned as a critique of the contemporary state of schooling. Shujaa (1993) recognized a growing trend in Black families taking control over their educational opportunities by removing their children from public schooling and placing them in independent or Christian schools. Shujaa contends that many families choose to place their children outside public schools so that they are provided with a competitive education enabling them to excel and achieve success in a perceived meritocracy.

This description seems applicable to the schooling choices of the Cooper and Jordan families. While they recognize the friction between their own positive history with schools and their critique of contemporary schooling, they are confident in their choice to educate their children outside of public schools. To this point, Melissa Jordan explains:

I went to Parrish City Schools, so it bothers me to say no. I know a good parent would stick with their children through everything and that includes being very vocal and very visible in school. So I could very well put them in a two way public school setting and be that parent who is very visible, who is diligent, who is active um, and feel secure in what I'm doing with them and where they are home. But when you look at the trends you see over the past few years and

testing scores being low, and I actually worked with a group of girls in Columbia High a couple years ago and seeing the dynamic now compared to when I was in school and looking and my kids, I just said, "wow, I don't know." I couldn't wrap my mind around that. I want them to be in a place where as a parent I feel secure when I drop them off. That in my heart of hearts, even if something happens I feel confident that the teachers would do what's in the best interest of the kids. And that's what we get at Parrish Christian Academy. Right now my instinct is not to send them to *public school*.

Sheryl Jordan echoes Melissa's concern for her children's safety and exposure to negative influences:

I don't have anything against public schools cause my girls went to public school but, my grandkids are where they need to be right now. *At Parrish Christian Academy*, Isaiah and Maya get to go to school together. But I think that the biggest difference is that they are not subjected to a lot of the negative stuff that is in the public school. The gangs stuff, the bad language, the out of control, not at Parrish Christian.

Similarly, Brianna Dawes explains her decision not to send her children to public school, although she refrains from explaining a specific rationale:

I would send both of my boys to East Parrish Elementary, *where I work*, with me. Because I feel that I had a public education and I turned out great... I would be able to choose the teachers. They would do that *for me*. And that would be fine. We really chose to do outside of East Parrish Elementary because my husband really wanted them to not be under mommy. And I had to agree with him with that. So we've been happy with the schools that we've chosen. *Would they attend Smith Creek elementary where they are zoned?* No. They wouldn't attend Smith Creek....I don't think I know anything that's so good or not about Smith Creek to where we would send them there.

I wonder whether rationales of low test scores, bad influences, and sub-par schools are euphemisms for larger institutionalized inequalities housed in public schools. Sheryl Jordan's position on their decision for educational control touches on the deeper and more insidious challenges of public schooling and perhaps a more accurate justification for their private or charter school preference:

June, my oldest daughter has been in the school system for 20 plus years now. And being a teacher she saw so much. The good the bad and the ugly... And

when it came time for her daughter to go to junior high, the schools were so bad there, gangs, just a lot of issues, she did not want her daughter to be part of it. She did not want her daughter subjected to the negative stuff. *Working in the school system*, she saw an awful lot. She saw how children, particularly black kids, became marked, in other words, labeled. *So all my grandchildren go or have gone to Parrish Christian Academy (PCA)*. It works for them. I don't have anything against public schools 'cause my girls went to public school but, my grandkids are where they need to be right now.

Here, Sheryl recognizes the challenges students of color face in many public schools. Reflecting on Sandra's (her eldest daughter's and former school teacher) decision to pull her child from public school and her recommendation for her sister, Melissa, to do the same, Sheryl acknowledges that it's not just the changing demographics or low test scores that propose a barrier to educational mobility. She suggests it is the curriculum, pedagogy, and culture of schools that are problematic. Neither the Jordans nor the Coopers provide a critique of the charter or private schools they've chosen, suggesting their belief that those challenges are not as relevant there.

Moving Up Through Staying Together

The communities within which the Cooper and Jordan families lived provided a space that was often safe and insular. Within these communities, the Cooper and Jordan family pedagogy of staying together thrived, where family members relied on one another for economic support, protection, love, and leisure. Sheltered from the outside world, the families reported few instances of racist encounters, and when they did occur, it was usually when they ventured outside beyond their segregated community. Their stories contribute to the literature and oral histories that reveal the strengths and importance of the segregated Black community (Morris, 1999; Noblit & Dempsey, 1996; Siddle Walker, 1996). This perspective does not suggest that segregation by law wasn't abhorrent,

but rather it helps us understand what was lost by the dismantling of the Black segregated communities and how this history may live on in the intergenerational pedagogy of many Black families.

Sheryl Jordan and Thomas Cooper's stories of their childhood recall self sufficient communities, tight knit families, and limited exposure to whites. Sheryl Jordan reaches further back into her lineage, remembering her grandmother as a self sufficient sharecropper who sharecropped only within her family.

They sharecropped but they sharecropped within the family. The only white folks she had to deal with was the ones at the bank... Barns with nothing but corn stacked up, and beyond that fields of tobacco as far as you could see. Grandma had it going on. Didn't deal with anybody but her children, her sons, there were enough family members to do the crops that they didn't have to hire out. But families back then were so close. I mean they were close! Really close. Large families. We were so rich and we didn't even know it. We were rich. Not from a money stand point but being loved by our parents, had good food, had each other.

You gotta remember, all I knew was work, work in the farms. I never thought about what. I never gave any thought to what white folk were doing. The only white people that we interacted with were the landlords, were the sharecroppers, we called them the bossman's kids. Don't recall them talking about anything that they did or where they went. *We were in a comfort zone.* You didn't know you weren't introduced to anything, you didn't know things could be different.

Sheryl's memories of growing up in a small, isolated community tell of a close extended family that fulfilled her needs with love, intimacy, and nutrition from their self sufficient farms, despite not being rich "by societies standards." When I asked Sheryl if she recalled any interactions with whites, she recollected only interacting with the bossman. Referring to her community as a comfort zone, Sheryl and her family were largely protected from the daily experiences of overt racism that integrated or urban communities experienced.

Thomas Cooper, similarly, recalls growing up in a segregated community with

limited interactions with the white community, with the exception when they went downtown to the shops where he was not allowed to enter. Like Sheryl, he spent most of this time with his six siblings, in school, home, and church:

I spent most of my time with my brothers and sisters. We had friends, but we was a family that stayed away from a lot of people, because in that particular time there was so much going on. Can I be real with you? Because in the sixties there was segregation. A lot of blacks and white didn't get along. But we were the type of family that had white friends. Our neighborhood, it was all blacks. now whites, not Mexicans, just black people....When I was going to school there was no integration. So I didn't go through a lot of things that other people went through that I heard.

However, unlike Sheryl's family, Thomas' mother and father had many interactions with whites. His mother, he described as an exception to the rule, was allowed to eat in establishments where other African Americans, including Thomas and his siblings, were not. His father also had white friends and Thomas recalls swimming nude in a sinkhole with a group of friends, white and black. Unlike Sheryl's upbringing where they didn't talk much about integration, Thomas recalls conversations with his parents about segregation and observed his mother and father have positive interactions with white folk. Despite these interactions, Thomas recalls growing up in a predominantly Black community, and spending most of his time with his family and other members of the Black community while in school and church.

Briana Dawes also grew up in a second generation, *de facto* segregated community. The neighborhood she grew up in was predominantly black, situated adjacent to the HBCU, as were her elementary, middle, and high school classes. She speaks of her close family and segregated upbringing:

We grew up in small house. I think in that small, intimate space you couldn't help but be close. Y'all made sure we was treating each other good. And I think we are close, we're still just as close today as we were back then growing up.

There aren't many family like this. Especially black families. And not just the Cooper family, but the extended family as well. We all worked together and get along together which is a blessing. I think we support each other pretty good.

But we grew up in a neighborhood where the general race was Black, African American. I know I had a few friends who may have been Caucasian or white, but not a lot of friends. I think it was mostly people like me.

When I asked the Cooper and Jordan families about their experiences with racism or discrimination, they often struggled to remember specific circumstances. After some thought however, their experiences suggested two patterns: first, the racist encounters with whites generally occurred outside of their communities and second, participants frequently responded to this question with examples of tensions within the Black community. While these intra-racial tensions, largely around complexion, may not be accurately labeled as racism, they were the discriminatory tensions some members of the Jordan and Cooper family experienced, which makes sense given their limited proximity to whites.

Sheryl Jordan, Thomas Cooper, and Brianna Dawes all recollect experiences of racist encounters outside of their communities, and in particular with white police officers. Both Brianna and Melissa shared stories which reveal the ways they carry with them their parents' experiences of racism and discrimination. For example, Brianna's memory of her father's racist encounter with a white police officer was activated when she herself had a similar encounter while driving along the same country roads as her father had, only decades later.

Interestingly, both Sheryl and Brianna experienced a moment of revelation during our interview process when they realized that an experience they had when they were younger, was in fact, shaped by institutionalized racism:

But it was mostly blacks and Hispanics *in high school*. One white girl and she just fit right in. But we didn't have any issues. You made me think, now. If it was the way it was supposed to be (*desegregated*) then, why was she the only white girl there? I don't think I had a feeling or opinion about it all *at the time*. Not saying it was not going on, but I can't remember. Nothing would stand out to make me make me think or feel like, something was wrong. Everything was cool as far as I knew (Brianna Dawes).

Now, let's back up. When you look at where we lived and where the boss man lived and where another white family that lived across the street, racism was there from the beginning and I didn't realize what it was. The Bossman's family would ask my mom if my sister Susie and I could come and help clean her house. My mother said yes. When we went over to help clean her house she would prepare a meal, but she separated us from the family. I didn't even realize what was happening, but Susie and I would be in a different area, just the two of us, and the family would be eating in the kitchen. I didn't see it as being wrong at the time. Not until you mentioned it just then. Hear me. It was a way of life. I didn't see it as being right or wrong, it was a way of life. That's how it was. I never looked at it as segregation but that's exactly what it was. I mean, I never even had---without you asking me, I wouldn't have thought--. (Sheryl Jordan)

These examples reveal moments when Sheryl and Brianna's notions of their upbringing were challenged by the friction of my questions. These aspects of their way of life weren't questioned, "It was a way of life," for Sheryl, and for Brianna, "everything was cool as far as [she] knew." These moments of realization, suggest that while it is probable that the Coopers' and Jordans' experiences with racism were restrained and shaped into public transcripts, it is also possible that their tight knit families, schools, and communities did in some ways protect them from overt racist encounters with whites. Moreover, their few conversations about race and racism with their families (which they described as sheltered or protected) limited opportunities to compare their situation to a more global perspective of institutionalized racism.

It's important to note a shift with the third generation. The neighborhoods in which they currently live, while predominantly middle class, African American communities, are

more diverse than their upbringings, including white, Latino/a, and Asian neighbors. Both the Cooper and Jordan families suggested that sending their children to school with other African Americans was not a "determining factor." Instead, they emphasized sending them to diverse schools where they are exposed to white, Black, and other cultural backgrounds. In fact, the schools for which they are zoned are predominantly Black and Latino/a. However, both families have opted not to send their children to those schools. Melissa Jordan describes her rationale for sending her children to private and charter schools. Keeping with the pedagogical strategy of staying together, while race isn't a determining factor in choosing their child's school, attending with families who share similar values is.

With my children's schooling, I think Explorer Charter or Parrish Christian Academy would be comfortable because I knew not just that they would have a similar set up but I also knew that there were families there that shared the same value systems that we share. And so that would help to build that dynamic and comfort zone as well. As for sending them to a school with children who are similar to them, who look like them, it is still important but it's not the determining factor. You want them to be able to identify with people that they see in a way that helps to reinforce who they are and they feel comfortable with who they are, but I also want them to be among diverse people.

For Brianna, just as she recalls having a positive relationship with a white librarian at the historically black library where she spent many afternoons as a child, her desire to send her children to Columbus Charter and Parrish Christian emphasize interactions with white teachers who will care for them.

Where Simon goes to school, it's pretty mixed. I think that it might be a third, third, third in his classroom. Which is good. Which is good. They try to keep a balance. But it's pretty much mixed...He has had some Black teachers and some white teachers. All of them are wonderful. Most of them are white folk. So that feels good to me that my boys can see that we're black but you have white people that can be good to you. And we never tried to make a difference. We never said anything that's negative toward any race (Brianna Dawes).

Both Melissa and Brianna reveal a common change in their intergenerational family pedagogy as compared to previous generations. While the first and second generations attended *de jure* and *de facto* segregated communities and schools, the third generation has been removed from a *de facto* segregated school environment and placed in private or charter schools. While the families still attend predominantly Black churches and continue to thread the importance of close family bonds into their family pedagogy, both Melissa and Brianna have opted to avoid the *de facto* segregated schools within their communities, which they describe as distinct from the schools of their youth. Likewise, both Thomas and Sheryl support their daughters' stance on avoiding public schools. Although the context of this family pedagogy evolved as the families today experience a very different world of *de facto* segregated schooling from their youth, the value of staying together as a family remains strong.

Moving Up Through Representation

Narratives among all three generations of the Cooper and Jordan families reflected the intergenerational pedagogical approach of what I refer to as representation: the embodied way family members represent themselves to others in the form of clothing, attitude, and behaviors. Jennifer Ritterhouse (2006) in her historiographic research on how Black and White children learned the concept of race in the Jim Crow South, addresses the way Black families taught their children a form of etiquette that countered Jim Crow's disparaging behavioral expectations of respectability. This etiquette was in contrast to the form of respectability designed and enforced by a white racist society (for example, proper ways to address whites and the racial street etiquette such as not sharing a side walk with a white person). She explains that many Black families tried to shelter their children from

the symbolic violence of racism by "teaching them to maintain a dignified public persona, and with it, their self respect (p. 19).

For the elder generations of both families, children were expected to behave a certain way within and outside their home. For Sheryl Jordan, her mother's pedagogy reflected the counter respectability described by Ritterhouse (2006). These behavioral expectations served a dual purpose, to protect her from the violence of racism and to build her esteem and identity as a strong Black woman.

No fighting, no cussing, no smoking in the streets, no going with married men. Better not come home with bad grades because we were not "dumb kids." No sassing, no talking back. And I will never forget *this*, and *it* sticks with me to this very day: *mama* taught us early on that all we had was our name and that we had to take care of it. She said to us, "Ya know when you grow up if you're name is right, you can get just about anything that you want." She said your name stands for something.

In one interview, Sheryl showed me two faded, black and white photographs of her in elementary school in the 1950's. She pointed out her clothing, as well as her classmates' in both photographs:

Look at that picture, look at that whole room. Look at that group. That was the Glee club, but look at those kids. Do they look like they are hurting for anything? Look at 'em! *Bowties, beautiful dresses....* Do you understand what I'm saying? Poor and don't even know that you're poor. You don't look poor, you're not acting poor.

Similarly, Thomas Cooper was well aware of the behavioral expectations of his parents and continued this pedagogy with his own children. Echoing Ritterhouse's discussion on counter respectability, Thomas suggests the importance of not allowing his daughters to use racist slang words because of their tendency to initiate violence and

further prohibited the use of slang so that they would be understood and respected by members of the white community.

When I was a kid, we was separated from a lot of people. Black people, that we was not to get involved with. Because of some learning, the way of speaking. We didn't like a lot of slang words. A lot of words that black people can use that white people doesn't understand what we saying so we didn't want that to happen with my family. We were brining our daughters that way, we didn't like all these slang words, "niggers" and "honkeys." They called the white people honkeys and all this stuff. But I never would with these kids upbringing, we never used that word. Because it was a terrible, terrible word that if you say something like that people would fight.

While the policies of Jim Crow were abolished before Thomas and Sheryl's children and grandchildren were born, expectations of how they represented themselves continued across generations. Melissa recalls messages of representation from both her teachers and her mother:

With the minority teachers that we had, with my black teachers, there was always a sense of remember who you are. What you represent and how you're actions impact how others view you and others like you. There was always that reminder, but not in a negative way. Whether it was keep doing what you're doing because that's what they need to see or maybe it was conversations of be careful of what you do because that is what they see.

My mom helped me know that my name was my brand and that's all I had at the end of the day. *My mom* would always say that. It's gonna be strong or it's gonna be weak based upon what I've done. If I was struggling with something *or* if I was mad or frustrated or if I didn't follow through with something that I was supposed to she would say 'Your name is all you have. So if you don't take care of that then you have nothing.'

Melissa's stories reveal the thread of this family message weaved across generations, from her grandmother, to her mother, to her. Her teachers also reminded her to stay rooted in her identity but also be conscientious of how her behavior represents both herself and her Black community. This pedagogy is reminiscent of Du Bois's description of double consciousness. In the *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) he writes: "[T]his double

consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others...One every feels his [sic] two-ness--and American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p.12)."

In addition to the behavioral expectations mentioned by Melissa, Thomas, and Sheryl, Brianna Dawes notes the moral messages that her family passed down to her and now she imparts unto her sons. It is important for her and her family that they live their life by certain social and religious morals, including being "good to people" and "good to God."

Mom and dad encouraged us and it sticks with me now to be good to people. When I am working with the kids that's something I tell them, if you don't remember nothing about Ms. Dawes is that you gotta treat people good. I tell my son, you see how long Grandma Pearl has lived? It's 'cause she been good to people. And if you want to say around for a while, you gotta be good. Folks gotta be good to God, gotta be good to God first.

While the third generation's stories did not share the same detailed narratives of the expectations of representation, their parents stories and their specific interactions with me and their elders revealed the continuation of this pedagogy. Despite living and teaching in the south for many years, as a New Yorker I was taken aback when Brianna and Melissa reminded their children to address me, as well as other elders in the room, as Miss and Ma'am. Further Simon, Isaiah, and Maya's parents and grandparents shared stories that describe their expectations of their children to do well in school and abide by their teachers and elder's expectations.

Moving Up Through Education and Intergenerational Investment

The final form of intergenerational family pedagogy discussed here is the families' values of education and their commitment to providing opportunities for educational and social mobility for the next generation. The Cooper and Jordan narratives reveal their memories of segregated schools as places where teachers were passionate and invested, but their stories also provide a critique of contemporary schools. This critique describes schools as spaces where children of color are "marked" and teachers and families are disconnected. Their positive memories of growing up paired with their critique of public schools today come together to inform their educational choices and values for the third generation. But the thread that weaves through each of these themes and is central to the families' pedagogy is an investment and hope for the generations to follow. The geographical moves and the messages of avoidance, staying together, representation, and commitment to education are all rooted in a common ideal of hope. The families maintain a sense of hope for their children and grandchildren, as Thomas Cooper explains, "to be more than what I am."

memories of school.

Both the first and second generations of the Cooper and Jordan families recall schools as places where they excelled and felt supported by their teachers. Each described themselves as the "teacher's pet" and had memories of a favorite teacher with whom they developed relationships that transcended the boundaries of the school walls. To this point, Thomas describes his relationship with his seventh grade teacher:

I remember my seventh grade teachers, her name was Mae Brown. Let's say it like this, I was the pet. She really liked me. She took me home and she bought

me clothes and I drove her car, and I would clean her house and raked the leaves. I had a wonderful upbringing. Of course, Mae Brown's husband was the dean of the HBCU. So, he took me in as his son.

Thomas's daughter echoes his positive experiences with school, recalling getting good grades and suggesting she had a teacher that was so invested that her teacher would remember her to this day.

I was the kind of student who made good grades. But I had to study to get 'em *I remember my favorite teacher from fourth grade, Ellie Simpson.* If I saw her today she would know me and I'd know her. She was just won-der-full! I was the class pet.

Similarly, Sheryl describes her experiences as the "teacher's pet" in various grade levels and provides examples of the lifelong friendships she sustained with her teachers and their children. Her stories suggest the level of prestige her teachers held in the community. She described how they seemed to be a different breed than what she was used to growing up on the farm:

My 4th grade teacher was a beautiful woman! Oh my God! She was a beautiful woman! And I think I was more mesmerized by her beauty coming from the farm and not being exposed to a lot of the things that the kids in the city had been exposed to, but she was a good teacher as well. I can recall her being very caring. Fifth grade I was the teacher's pet, honey. Sixth grade teachers pet, oh yes I was.

Sheryl's daughter, Melissa, also developed a meaningful relationship with her teachers while attending the de facto segregated elementary school. She notes a distinct change in tone when she moved to East Parrish Elementary, which at that time changed from the predominantly African American school that Thomas attended, to a predominantly white school. Melissa's story tells of this shift from Samson Hill Elementary to East Parrish:

There was a completely different dynamic between the teachers that I had at Sampson Hill than the teacher I had at East Parrish. From just being very

caring and very nurturing and not looking at you as the student, but as this little girl, and looking at me and treating me as if I was their child or family member. If I was out of line, "you want me to call your mama and tell her what you doin'?" like in a way that I knew that they meant business. They could say that to me in a way that it was more like an aunt versus a teacher. I did not have that at East Parrish. It was fine, but did I like she brought me in and gave me that closeness? No. But it may have just been her.

Melissa's experience reflects a pattern of changes that many children faces as they left their historically segregated school communities to attend either predominantly white schools or *de facto* segregated schools run by white teachers, administrators and a whitestream curriculum and pedagogy. These changes were also reflected in the stories the families shared on the topic of family-school relationships addressing their perception of the recent shift in positive family-school partnerships.

family involvement.

Thomas and Sheryl remember the ways their parents were involved in their education: attending school events, PTA meetings, and involving the family in church related activities. They also remember the ways they were involved in their own daughters' education by attending school events, having relationships with teachers outside of school, and modeling lifelong education and work ethic through their own practices. These memories also highlight the qualities of their teachers as blurring the boundaries between school and community. Sheryl recalls the strength of her teachers and the relationship her mother forged with them:

The teachers, oh my god, they took pride in *their work*. Oh you're talking about a village! *Not only did the teachers like me*, all of the teachers liked my mother because they knew she was a lady that was about something and worked for the good of everybody. I'm very serious about that. They respected her so much they would actually visit our homes some evenings just to sit and talk and laugh with my mother. No reason other than just to socialize.

In another example, she recalls the principal of her school visiting her home to let her mother know that her children will no longer need to walk miles to find their school bus.

Back in Smithville, we had to walk a mile to catch the bus. and, that was that, we had to do that for several years and, and I can recall one summer, we were working in tobacco, just as clear as day, I can see it right now, the principal paid a visit to the farm and we were all, we were just working, and he I can recall, that man had on some brown and white shoes. and he put his foot up on the tobacco cart, a gentlemanly like ya know, and he wanted my mother to know that when school started in September that the bus would be coming down the road to pick us up. She hugged that man.

Likewise, Thomas shares a memory of a time when he had to negotiate a tension between one of his daughters and her teacher:

I remember one time, my oldest daughter, she went to school one day and she raised her hand and she knew the answer but the teacher did not call on her, so she came home from school that day, and said, "Dad, I knew the answer but the teacher wouldn't call on me." And I said, "Oh, I don't see anything wrong with that's ok." But come to find out who that teacher was Marian Simmons and we used to sing together! And this girl just happened to be Gwen's teacher! Once Marian found out that she was my daughter, everything changed.

In this story, Thomas's relationship with his daughter's teacher through their Gospel community help build and sustain a positive relationship between the Cooper family and their public school teacher. Although the Cooper and Jordan families shared various ways their parents and themselves have been involved in their children's education, their stories speak to the two-way relationship between teachers and families, suggesting that family involvement in education can also be defined by teacher-family partnerships. Reflecting on this relationship, their narratives moved from their memories of family involvement when they were young to a critique of contemporary family involvement in schools. Melissa describes her generation as the "last branch of this tree:"

I think the teachers at Sampson Elementary knew what they were dealing with in knowing that they were having children that were coming from not the best economic backgrounds or situations, and so they weren't scared to go into the housing project, they weren't afraid to say, "I'll take you home, it's dark." *I think* that my class growing up may have been the last branch of that tree where that area of responsibility continue to carry through. So that has broken. Before it may have been the teacher and the parent, you know the school and the families really working together to figure out the best interest of their child, whereas now it's like well this is my child and you can't tell me what to do. A more of a defensive stance, versus more collaborative.

Similarly, Brianna Dawes also speaks to this shift, noticing the contrast from her own experiences with family involvement and what she observes as a counselor at East Parrish Elementary:

I'm not sure what has changed so much, but the parents are not there. The parents are not there. The ones who come are the ones who...well, "the good ones." Their kids are fine, we're glad you're all coming but the ones you really need to come in there, they don't show up. Maybe that was happening when I was younger, but I didn't notice it because my parents were there. But, families and schools, I think we do what we can to make the school welcoming and to invite the parents in, but, I don't know, we missing something. We missing something. I just can't figure out what it is...And sometimes the kids come to me, it's heartbreaking, when a fifth grader graduates and they stand around and nobody's there to see 'em.

Melissa and Brianna emphasize not only a change in the ability of parents to be involved in their child's school, but also the change in the quality of teachers, who now approach their work as "a job, rather than a passion." Recognizing this drastic shift in the nature of family-school relationships, the Cooper and Jordan family stories provide a subtext, suggesting their exceptionality. While many other families struggle to remain involved in their child's school or build meaningful relationships with teachers, the Cooper and Jordan families have sustained this quality, overcoming the barriers to these relationships by sending their children to private schools which they feel reflect their own ethical and religious values. It's worth recognizing here that while the Cooper and Jordan families noted the limited interaction between other African American families and

schools, they did not go far as to say that these families are not invested or do not care about their children's education (as is often deduced by educators, politicians, and scholars in both practice and in research).

The Cooper and Jordan family narratives suggest the varied ways their families have been and continue to be involved and invested in education across generations. Not only were parents involved in their children's education, but grandparents as well. Thomas Cooper's stories told of conversations he shared with his grandchildren expressing his high expectations for their achievement. Sheryl Jordan, whose daughter and grandchildren often reside in her home, also shared stories of her involvement in and support of their education. These stories of involvement are a symbol of their investment. For the Cooper and Jordan families, educational and social mobility has little meaning without continuing this upward movement across generations.

intergenerational investment.

Inherent in the emotional, physical, economic, and symbolic investments families make for their children's future is a sense of hope. The Oxford English Dictionary (2013) defines hope as desire combined with expectation. While desire and expectation can be seen as static frames of mind, hope is much more fluid. Rather than an object, it is a process through which people are moved to move. Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006) suggests hope as "rooted in men's incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search" (p. 91). The Cooper and Jordan family narratives tell a story of intergenerational pedagogy that is impelled by a process of hope. Their moves *toward* are fueled by thoughts of and hope for a better future for their descendants.

In one example, Thomas recalls a poignant conversation with his father when he was in high school, while working in his factory:

There weren't too many black people going to college then, although I remember the HBCU being there a long time. I remember *this one time*, when dad was working at his cement business and I worked there after school to make a little money, you know, to buy my clothes and that kind of thing. But I remember dad telling me, "Son, this work is not for you. It's too hard. I mean lifting all this cement and stuff, putting it on the truck and that kind of stuff." So, I left. Once I left that's when I started working at Forrester Medical Center.

Thomas's father wanted a different path for his son, one that didn't involve challenging manual labor. Likewise, Thomas invests hope in his children and grandchildren. He explains, "I want my kids, my grandkids, to be more than what I am." Although Thomas was a successful doctor's assistant at Forrester Medical Center, he never did go to college. Surpassing his parents education of completing the eighth grade, Thomas graduated high school and received further vocational education while he worked at the medical center. However, he wanted his daughters to have more opportunities than he and to attend college. This message was clearly interpreted by his daughter, Brianna, who in turn has moved the hope of her parent's generation toward her sons:

My parents always instilled in us to make sure that we go to college. That's what they said. And I wouldn't dare say, "but you didn't!" Wouldn't dare say that. But they wanted us to do more than they did. So I try to tell *my sons* now that school is very important. School comes first. If you get your education you can do anything.

Sheryl also carried the baton of intergenerational investment, a tradition which her mother passed to her years before:

They [June and Melissa] are making monumental sacrifices for their children, to do have better than what they had. And they are just doing what's done onto them. My mother would always say, I wanted you all to have better than what I had. And I wanted to June and Melissa to have better than what I had.

But intergenerational investment is not a linear, one way process. Younger generations also invest in their elders, cycling back to those who originally invested all of their resources in the hopes of the educational and social mobility of their children. Sheryl Jordan was an integral force in supporting her mother's completion of her GED, a pinnacle moment in Sheryl's mother's life.

My mother was something else. Back in those days they weren't educated. My daddy didn't even get to the third grade, he could not read or write. My mother got as far as the 8th grade, but did not finish. So, back then I had a job working as a recruiter with the Smithville Community College to encourage folks to complete their GEDs and my mother was a second person I recruited. Her best friend was the first person...only because I went past her house first. When Smithville Community had its graduation they marched because they completed their GEDs. And they had the caps and gowns on and everything. You would have thought she had gotten her PhD. That was good. That was good.

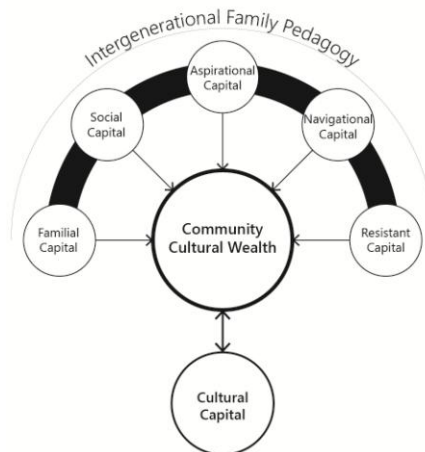
Each of the participants in this study reflected on the educational achievements and limitations of their elders in relation to their own achievement, which helped shape their family pedagogy to ensure that their children would "have better than what they had." The stories of Maya, Isaiah, and Simon (the third generation) suggest the materialization of their elder's hopes and investment. Although they are young and our interviews were limited, their stories of education reveal a pleasure of learning and reading as well as a clear work ethic. They briefly commented on their knowledge of their elders' histories, suggesting a connection to or knowledge of their past, to something bigger than they are. While some of the children spoke 'tongue in cheek' about their elders' upbringing--joking about the boring stories of growing up on the farm or about how poverty stricken their elders childhood seemed--the knowledge they have of their roots alludes to conversations that they are having with their elders about the past and how it relates to their lives. These conversations offer a glimpse into the generational tilling of hope and investment that

Maya, Isaiah and Simon will not only carry with them, but which also will move them toward their future.

Community Cultural Wealth

In the previous section, I sought to interpret the Cooper and Jordan family narratives thematically. This analysis revealed how families enacted an intergenerational family pedagogy to move their families across geographical and cultural spaces toward a future of social and educational mobility. Ultimately, these moves, choices and messages were moved by hope and investment in the generations to follow. The following framework of Community Cultural Wealth will further explicate the multiplicity of the families' resources and strengths. In this section I will discuss the various forms of capital activated by the Cooper and Jordan families and suggest that these resources can be understood not only as Community Cultural Wealth, but as the composition of an intergenerational family pedagogy.

Figure. 3 Conceptual Framework. Adapted from: Yosso (2005)



The traditional use of cultural capital theory to understand the educational and social mobility of communities of color has been limited to an emphasis on White,

European American, and high brow forms of capital, which often resulted in the conclusions that families of color lack capital. A growing number of scholars have refuted this perspective by broadening our understanding of how cultural capital, as well as other forms of capital, are manifested and activated among historically marginalized communities (Moll et al, 1992; Yosso, 2004; Franklin, 2002; Morris 2004). Tara Yosso (2004) developed the framework of Community Cultural Wealth (see Figure 3.) to explain and understand, "[T]he array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro forms of oppression" (p.77). As shown in Figure 3, the various forms of capital that comprise Community Cultural Wealth can also be interpreted as expressions of the intergenerational family pedagogy of the Cooper and Jordan families. Although these categories appear distinct in the above conceptual model and I will unpack them separately in the discussion to follow, in actuality they are dynamic, fluid, and overlapping. For example, in this study, I see familial capital as well as aspirational capital as influencing all other forms of capital, as the families engage a pedagogy of hope to navigate, resist, and aspire within and beyond their social and community networks.

Familial Capital

Yosso (2004) defines familial capital as the network of extended family who nurture "a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition (p.79)." Through the messages and stories passed down across generations, children and family members counter isolation, and foster connection to something larger than themselves. This sense of family identity not only helps children and families push back against adversity and oppressive societal structures, but to see beyond the barriers through aspiration and hope.

Each generation of the Jordan and Cooper families had knowledge of one another's history. While the family stories emphasized looking beyond their struggles, both Melissa Jordan and Brianna Dawes recalled their parents' racist encounters with police officers and white community members and used those stories to make sense of their own experiences with racism. The youngest generation of the Cooper and Jordan families also told stories of the ways in which they are loved and supported by their extended kin. Maya Jordan told of a time when she struggled to deal with the untimely death of her pet chinchilla, but was supported by her mother and grandmother who all slept together in Maya's room to provide comfort. Similarly, Simon Dawes recalled an important moment when his grandfather came to watch him play football and he scored a touchdown. For Simon, the experience of scoring the touchdown was described in the context of his family members' support. Simon relished his grandfather's response, which was serendipitously recorded on his family member's video camera:

My granddaddy saw me play in the game he was pretty happy. I made a touchdown and he was like, "Wooooow!" My cousin recorded *the game* and then I listened to it and when *I made the touchdown, I heard granddaddy say* "There he goes!" And I was running and running and got a touchdown. Did my granddaddy tell you that he was a football player like me? He told me a lot of times. He made a lot of touchdowns.

Simon draws connections from his identity as a young football player to his grandfather who played many years before his was born. These examples of familial capital show how elders in the Cooper and Jordan families provide affection, support, and a connection to their families' pasts, likely strengthening their identity as part of rooted collective. Just as the youngest generation of the Cooper and Jordan families thrived in homes where a familial capital support their esteem and educational achievement, elder generations sense of identity and purpose are nurtured as well, as they invest their

resources in their children and grandchildren, moving their dreams deferred with hope to the next generation.

Social Capital

Yosso defines social capital as the networks and resources that communities offer, which can provide "instrumental and emotional support to navigate through societies institutions (p79)." Over the generations, the Cooper and Jordan families engaged various community resources to support their academic achievement and mobility. One major source of social capital is and continues to be the church. Historically among African American communities, the church, the school, and the family were three pillars of strength and capital (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). More than a religious institution, the church was a location of political organizing as well as communal and educational support. Likewise, not only did the families in this study refer to their faith and belief in God as central to their family identity, but the role of the church in their lives proved an important resource for building social networks, emotional and spiritual support, and strengthening a collective group identity. Thomas talks of growing up in the church, spending an entire Sunday there with his family and following in his father's footsteps as a Gospel singer. Here, Thomas shares of the role of the church in his family's identity and as a resource to keep them out of trouble:

We were mostly a Christian family. We believed in going to church. We were brought up that way. My dad, he was a Gospel singer. He sang with four guys. And being the seventh son of that family, I took that on. And as of today I'm still singing Gospel. I think it kept me out of trouble. And the whole family, all of my brothers sing Gospel music. I think that my family has kept it positive and mingling with all people of all races

For Thomas, the church was a resource to keep them focused on faith, education, and general positivity. Singing Gospel was a source of pride, social networking, and part

of the fabric of his family identity. In a story mentioned earlier in this chapter, the social networks Thomas developed touring as a Gospel singer proved valuable when it allowed him to make a bond with his daughter's teacher whom she was having challenges with. Once Thomas realized that he had sung with her teacher years before, their relationship outside of school allowed for a more meaningful and attentive educative relationship between his daughter and the teacher.

In the Jordan family, church was also a place where they sought the social networks of folks like them. Melissa reflected on the historical role of the church when her mom was in school, as an anchor of the community where you would see your teacher not just in the school house, but in the church at community at large. She ends by noticing the absence of this in contemporary school communities:

Back when my mom was in school, it was family, school, and church. I think in the traditional African American community, it was common for the teacher to have taught your mom and your dad and your grandma, so they knew about your family. They knew your parents. If you did something wrong, they would spank you in school and then tell your mom that they spanked you and then you would get another one when you got home! But then they were the same people that you saw in your church, they were the same people that you saw in your community, at your store, so they were really engrained in that place. It's not like that not now.

Despite Melissa's commentary on the disconnect between schools, churches, and families, the church remains an important facet of the Cooper and Jordan families' lives. They have chosen to integrate their faith based and educational values by sending their children to Parrish Christian Academy where "the Word" is enmeshed in their school curriculum. Melissa describes her children's school as a church first where families are joined in a common perspective of a "core belief in God" making relationships stronger "because you're operating in love and in faith and not in worldly things. The social capital

of the church becomes a potential source of educational mobility when families send their children to a school that is rooted in the same faith based values reflected in the home.

Navigational Capital

Navigational capital are the resources families use to maneuver through social systems and institutions, including structures that were not originally intended for communities of color, such as historically predominantly white universities (Yosso, 2004). This navigational capital can be motivated through individual agency or by tapping into social networks, such as guidance counselors, pastors, and co-workers. While my participants did not consistently share details as to *how* they learned to navigate certain systems, such as being a first generation college student, they did allude to the values imparted by their families to motivate them maneuver new terrains confidently.

Thomas's parents did not attend college nor complete high school. However, his memories of his parents confidently navigating structural barriers, such as Jim Crow segregation, instilled values of self assurance and determination that contributed to Thomas's success navigating public schools, neighborhoods, employment as a doctor's assistant at a historically white establishment, and his ability to support his children's educational mobility. His mother's confidence and acceptance in all white establishments, as well as his father's amicable relationships with white men, helped Thomas learn how to navigate both segregated and integrated spaces. When asked how he would feel, hypothetically since his community was still segregated, if he had integrated in to a white high school during in the 1960's, he responded with fervor:

I don't have no problem going to anybody's school. I'd walk right on in. It's been like that with me and it's still like that with me. I wouldn't have no problem, I don't care who's there. It could be a thousand white people there or a thousand whatever people and I'm the only black. Whatever, it doesn't bother

me. I've been like that for years. I'm the type of guy, I've been through a lot of, what can I say, painful things in my life. I've worked hard. I get what I want. In order to get what you want, you gotta work for it, that's what I'm all about it. If I can get it, I'll walk right into whatever, white people, black people, whatever. I like taking control.

Additionally, his self determination and values of staying away from people and places of "trouble" have become a form a navigational capital which he in turn has imparted to his children. Navigational Capital as a form of intergenerational family pedagogy is also shared upward, from younger to elder generations. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Sheryl Jordan assisted her mother in navigating community resources to acquire her G.E.D. Sheryl had gained this particular navigational capital through a job working at a community college, and she shared this knowledge with her mother to help her maneuver through a system that in her generation, was largely prohibited to African Americans.

Resistant Capital

When I first listened to the Cooper and Jordan family stories I didn't hear a narrative of resistance. I expected their stories to follow the many counternarratives of African American families I've read about: sharing stories that critiques whiteness, racism, and the implementation/consequences of desegregation. I further expected stories of involvement and advocacy in political organizing and civil rights movements that were taking shape in Parrish City in the 1960's and 70's. My expectations were naive and reflected a misunderstanding of the multiplicity of Black American experiences. Although the participants didn't share the above expected stories, resistance to the status quo was ever present in their narratives. A determined dedication to the social and educational mobility of their families resists the raced and classed power structures that have

historically and continue to provide barriers to African American achievement. Yosso defines resistant capital as the "skills that foster oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (p. 80)." While the Coopers and Jordans carefully fostered behaviors that would *not* be seen as oppositional to elders and both Black and White community members, by utilizing the various forms of community cultural wealth, the families instilled a strong sense of identity and confidence in their children. This confidence paired with a strong work ethic and commitment to educational achievement, counters the deeply rooted oppressive stance on African American education as a threat to white supremacy (Franklin, 2002).

In addition to the families commitment to education as a form of resistance, the cultivating of a double consciousness is also a form of resistance. Families expected their children to speak, act, and participate in the school and community in a particular way. They were taught to stay away from folks whose behavior would reflect negatively not only on the family, but on their community and race in general. This form of counter-respectability as discussed earlier in this chapter, encouraged children to develop a strong sense of self and connection to their family, while maintaining a public persona that afforded them the opportunity to excel.

Aspirational Capital

I will close this analysis with a discussion of a particular form of capital contingent on hope and intimately tied to the intergenerational investment discussed above:

aspirational capital. This capital refers to the families' ability to maintain a perspective of hope and resiliency despite structural or symbolic barriers (Yosso, 2004). The aspirational capital of elders is integrated into a family pedagogy that encourages their children to

move beyond the limits of their parents' occupational and educational attainment. In turn, the children of these families also experience hope and the ability to strive for educational mobility, however not with the specific goal in mind to achieve *more* than their parents. But rather to honor their elders and ancestors and the sacrifices they made to achieve all that they had in the face of adversity. On the same morning that I write this, I met with Thomas to discuss how his stories will be represented in this dissertation. When I explained the major thread of intergenerational investment and hope for the next generation a smile lit his face and he proudly cried out, "Yes!" We sat at his kitchen table, while my infant daughter bounced on my lap, and discussed the power and trust we are investing in the next generation to "be the change." Just as we were finishing our conversation he scurried to his bedroom to bring me a folded typed letter from his eldest granddaughter. He handed me the letter with a tremendous smile, instructing me to read it. The letter thanked her grandfather for all his support in helping her achieve her educational goals: attending an elite program for high school students who are interested in careers in healthcare and being accepted to a study abroad program in Costa Rica. Thomas kept looking at my baby daughter and gesturing to her as he explained the weight he places on his children and grandchildren's future. While I didn't have my recorder with me, what he said went something like this, 'I really believe in the hope of the next generation. If not for the children, then we have nothing.

Familial and Generational Comparison

Although the above analysis addressed how both the Coopers and Jordans engaged Community Cultural Wealth and an intergenerational pedagogy to navigate their families toward upward social and educational mobility, the family experiences are unique and

nuanced. Their stories shared in the previous two chapters, suggest some dissimilarities across generations and between families. Difference across *generations* within families is notable regarding the social and educational in segregated or integrated communities. Differences across *families* include varied emphases on the following themes: avoiding trouble, family identity as exceptional, and their critique of contemporary schools. In addition to these distinctions, there are also demographic differences across families. The Cooper family stories conveyed: 1) Thomas Cooper as main caregiver while his wife worked the second shift 2) Thomas Cooper and Brianna Dawes as heterosexual, married, and living in dual income households and 3) the Cooper's geographic movements across and within the limits of Parrish City, from urban to suburban. On the contrary, The Jordan family stories expressed: 1) Sheryl Jordan as main caregiver, 2) Sheryl, Melissa , and her sister as single mothers and 3) the Jordan's geographic movements from rural to urban to suburban, across county lines.

A comparison across the first and second generations of the two families suggested a difference between the experiences of mobility within segregated communities. While the second generation (Melissa Jordan and Brianna Dawes) continue the tradition of a strong dedication to education and social mobility, their movement has been more lateral as compared to their parents. Though Melissa and Brianna were born into working class families and neighborhoods, by the time they graduated high school their parents had moved to solid middle class communities and had excelled in their careers as a nurse, doctor's assistant , and a social worker (Brianna's mother and father and Melissa's mother respectively). Although Thomas describes his parents as doing very well economically, they lived in a working class community and had jobs in the factory, a lifestyle from which

Thomas's father encouraged him to move away. Likewise, Sheryl Jordan's move from the sharecropping farm toward middle class status in Parrish City was drastic as compared to Melissa's shifts within Parrish City. However, Melissa's stories describes strong differences between the urban and suburban communities through which she moved, and I must be careful not to place a particular value on one move over another, as its impact is carried in perception. From the stories that were shared, the second generation moved up along with their elders, while now, as adults with their own children, are currently steady in their position according to social class and educational attainment.

The thread of segregation across the generations is also worth noting. All three generations of the Cooper and Jordan families continue to live in predominantly African American, middle class communities, although they are currently more integrated than the communities where the first and second generation grew up . They also all still attend predominantly African American churches. While the third generation are currently zoned for *de facto* segregated schools, both Brianna and Melissa are careful to avoid sending their children to those school communities, with the Jordans explicitly noting that the public schools today are different from when they were younger. The third generation (Simon, Brianna, and Isaiah) are the first in the families to attend what the families describe as an integrated charter or private school, where the classes comprise of multiple racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds⁴. Additionally, most of their teachers and administrators are white, also divergent from G1 and G2's segregated education.

⁴ The Cooper and Jordan families describe the youngest generation's classes as integrated in contrast to the parents and grandparents largely segregated education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), Parrish Christian Academy was 69% White, 30% African American and 1% Hispanic. Columbus Charter on the other hand was 82% African American, 8% Hispanic, 5% White, 3 % two or more races, 1% Asian, and 1% Native American.

Differences across families can be seen by how they addressed issues of avoidance, exceptionality, as well as commentary on contemporary schools. The Cooper family, in particular Thomas, discussed the value of staying away from trouble, certain neighborhoods, and particular members of the community. This theme emerged throughout his stories and during each of the interviews I conducted. Although his daughter Brianna also discussed staying out of trouble, she emphasized morals on more depth, in particular, the need to be good and obey. The Jordan family did not use the same language as Thomas and did not explicitly place an emphasis on staying out of trouble, however, their actions (such as switching schools after Melissa was getting into fights) did suggest that they shared a similar value. The Jordans seemed to underscore searching for safe spaces (schools and neighborhoods) over avoiding trouble. While avoiding trouble and searching for safety can be overlapping values, the Jordans and the Coopers chose only one of those attributes to emphasize in their narratives, likely indicating how these values played out in their lived experiences and communities.

Secondly, the Thomas stressed the ways in which his family was exceptional and stood apart from many other African American families in the community in terms of their social status and their acceptance by members of the white community. The Jordans did not suggest an economically or racially exceptional family identity, but they did stress their academic achievements, in particular the academic success of the second and third generations. Sheryl described her daughters as academically gifted and Melissa talked extensively about her academic success and accolades in high school. In terms of the third generation, Melissa and Sheryl seem to take a more balanced approach, discussing both their strengths and needs, academically and socially.

The third contrasting area is their rationale for the decision to send the third generation to private or charter schools. While the Jordans were clear of their critique of contemporary schooling and contrasted it to the positive public schooling experiences of the past, the Coopers refrained from an overt critique of public schools by simply stating that their children are where they ought to be and that sending them to the school where they are zoned was never really considered. A clear rationale for their decision to pursue alternative schooling was never clearly articulated, despite the many times I prompted them with questions. However, I believe it is likely that they chose alternative schooling for similar reasons as the Jordans, although I cannot be certain as this perspective was not explicitly shared during the interviews.

Conclusion

My interpretations of the Cooper and Jordan narratives suggested an intergenerational pedagogy, propelled by the process of hope, which supported their children and grandchildren's educational and social mobility. Through a series of moves, choices, and messages shared across generations, the Cooper and Jordan families navigated their communities, neighborhoods, and schools toward safe spaces and locations of possibilities. Through the narrative themes of moving toward, staying away, staying together, representation, education, and intergenerational investment, their stories revealed the binding strengths of the family as well as the historically segregated communities they called home. The family stories speak of segregated communities, both *de jure* and *de facto*, where in addition to their families, their teachers, neighborhoods, and churches nurtured and protected them from the adverse conditions of a raced society.

The strengths of the families and their community networks were further explicated through the conceptual framework of Community Cultural Wealth. The intergenerational family pedagogy evidenced by the family narratives engaged various forms of capital to support the mobility and educational opportunities of their children. Through navigational, familial, resistance, social, and aspirational capital, the Cooper and Jordan families maneuvered communities and institutions to emerge from their working class and sharecropping backgrounds toward a middle class identity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Moving On: Contradictions, Conclusions, and (Im)Possibilities

The previous six chapters explored the narratives of social and educational mobility among three generations of two African American families in the South. Their stories revealed an intergenerational family pedagogy and Community Cultural Wealth that enabled the families to navigate their communities and schools and invest in the educational and social mobility of the next generation. This pedagogy emphasizes movement across geographic spaces, strong educational values, and intergenerational investment. Their stories highlight the strengths of the all Black schools of their youth while offering a critique of contemporary public schools. The elder generations' memories of school as places where their mobility took root contrasts to their position on contemporary public schools, which they describe as lacking the sense of community that was the cornerstone of their childhood education.

However, the stories I have re-presented in this dissertation are incomplete. Finding the valid narrative or the true narrative is not the aim of this methodology. By recognizing the multiplicity of the stories tell about our lives and honoring the (im)possibilities of our representations and conclusions, we can develop more textured understandings of the world in which we live. Thus, it seems appropriate to close this dissertation with a deeper discussion of the contradictions of my positionality and the complexities of postcritical research. In this chapter, I will begin by problematizing how my whiteness and outsider status played out throughout this study through what Wanda Pillow (2003) refers to as

reflexivities of discomfort. Next, I will revisit the narratives and counternarratives of desegregation and family involvement, reviewed in Chapter Two, to address the ways in which these narratives are complicated by the Cooper and Jordan family stories. Finally, I will close with the implications of this study on future research, policy, and practice.

Writing into the contradictions

In this section, I will further address the challenges I faced throughout this inquiry, problematizing how my whiteness and identity infiltrated the design, implementation and representation of this study. In a qualitative research workshop in 2011 with Professor Bill Ayers, we discussed the complexities of our work, in particular the problems we face as white researchers studying and talking about race. He suggested to *write into the contradictions*. There are always incongruities, complications, and loose ends in any research methodology. Postcritical ethnography, however, stands apart from traditional research methods by honoring and drawing the contradiction into the conversation and writing into them. What follows is a discussion of the major areas where I've spent most of my reflexive energy exploring: expectations, identity, constraints, and (im)possibilities.

When I first began this study, I struggled to decide if it was appropriate for me pursue a study of African American families. Should a white woman engage in a study of the lives of African Americans? Arguments from both sides of the spectrum were convincing. On the one end, some argue that only those belonging to a particular racial, cultural, or ethnic group should research within that group (Chadderton, 2012). This argument is aimed at avoiding a tendency for white researchers to exploit, misunderstand, and/or misrepresent the experiences of historically marginalized communities. This argument has its merits. As my research study unfolded, it influenced my reflexivity and

pushed me to constantly question my intentions: "Why am I interested in African American cross generational stories of education?" "What is there to gain by engaging in this research and what is at risk?"

I was compelled to better understand the experiences of African Americans in Parrish City because I was frustrated by the way families of color in the community where I taught, as well in general educational policy and practice, are often framed through a deficit lens. I was dismayed by what I perceived as a misunderstanding of communities of color, shaped by racism that is structurally entrenched in our institutions and embodied in the everyday lives of the people who navigate them. But given the insidious ways racism creeps into our lives, how could I be sure that the narratives I perform in this dissertation do not perpetuate the very white colonial structures they are aiming to dismantle? I still don't have clear answers to the above questions and I continue to grapple with them even as I write this concluding chapter. However, I believe that white scholars must play a vocal and complementary role in critical studies of race and power, even as I continue to discover how this unfolds outside the rhetoric of critical white studies and in the realities of our research. Amy Bergerson (2010) suggests that white scholars centering race must be careful not to appropriate the critical work and theories emerging from communities of color. Instead, they "must join the ranks of those celebrating the experiences of people of color and insisting that the academy recognize these experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge" (p.59).

Some contend that white researchers run the risk of their bias misrepresenting their participant's stories and that the power differentials between researcher and participant will inevitably shape the results (Chadderton, 2012). This caution represents the messiness of

white researchers studying across the color line. This argument suggests that a true story exists and can be represented by the qualified researcher. However, I have approached this study with the understanding that the stories we share are performative, dialogical encounters, embodying our histories and identities in ephemeral form. Thus, the stories my participants shared were shaped by the interaction of their identities and mine. And the representation of their stories in this dissertation is itself a performative encounter. Given my recognition that there is no single narrative and that my participants' stories were shaped by the context within which they were shared, I have the responsibility of explicitly addressing what Pillow (2003) refers to as reflexivities of discomfort. Pillow (2003) defines this as reflexivity "that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous" (p.188). She calls for reflexivity that goes beyond simply reflecting on how our biases influenced interpretations toward recognizing the discomfort inherent in acknowledging the impossibility of sharing the accurate or right story. To this end, acknowledging the ways my whiteness, history, and multiple identities participated in shaping all aspects of this study does not lead to a more valid narrative. Rather, it helps the reader to understand the stories of my participants as performative representations of their lives. And the notion that a true narrative doesn't exist does not mean that there is no knowledge to be gained from this study. Through different interpretations new ideas become apparent and enrich our ongoing process to understand.

When I began this study I imagined the stories my participants would share. Assuming their stories would complement the counternarratives I was already familiar with, I expected critiques of desegregation and suspicion of Euro-centric curricula and educational policy. I recall feeling lost after my first round of interviews seemingly

illustrated neither of the above. But I had to take a few steps back, remembering the stories as performative encounters. Although I thought I would reflexively engage my identity easily, I got lost in the neutrality of my whiteness.

As I prepared for my interviews I asked a colleague, an African American male doctoral student who was born and raised near Parrish City, to meet me for coffee and provide feedback on my interviewing approach as well as the development of my questions. We recently met one another while enrolled in a graduate course and knew little of each other's backgrounds. About halfway through the interview, I asked him to share his memories of racism that he recalls experiencing along with his family. At this part of the interview there were many pauses. In between the gaps of his words, I noticed him navigate, searching for a new route to tell the story. I was reminded of Elaine Lawless' (2000) work on the gaps in narratives of survivors of abuse. She explains:

I want to explore...the places in narratives where language breaks down, where the women “fail” to locate words/language to depict events that go beyond the ordinary...This analysis will point our gaze directly toward the disruption of the narrative toward the gap, the tear, and invite us to “read” the silence, the void, the muted voice of that moment (p.71).

At the end of the interview, I nervously asked my colleague about the gaps in his stories. Noticing that there were elements to his story he did not choose to share, I wasn't sure if it was fair for me to ask him to elaborate on the experience of his pauses, but in an effort to better understand the storytelling relationship with my participants, I inquired. He shyly smiled and responded genuinely that he was, indeed, holding back. His voice muted against my whiteness. In particular, he felt uncomfortable sharing stories of his elders' critiques of white folk, especially referring to the word "honkey" or other language perceived as derogatory. I am thankful for this colleague's openness of mind and heart to

help me strengthen my practice as a researcher attempting to destabilize whiteness through my scholarship.

This experience helped me to recognize moments in the study where my participants words broke down and notice when they carefully changed course. But unlike the above example with my colleague, I did not press my participants to further share the memories that sunk into the pauses. I recognize the limits of our relationship and constraints of our identities in the storysharing moment. The concept of participants' voice is not solely about what they share, but also what they choose not to. It's about their right to control their narratives and my responsibility to honor whichever form their voice takes.

But there may have also been moments when the families spoke directly to my whiteness. Sharing their stories with the explicit aim of releasing it into a public transcript that will be read and heard by other white folk, researchers, and educators. And at other moments it seemed as though the participants and I met at an intimate intersection where our identities and histories spoke with one another. For example, Melissa Jordan shared a profound existential moment when she recalled realizing that with the birth of a first child comes the heavy, incomprehensible knowledge of life and death. This story may not have been shared to any researcher. Resting noticeably between Melissa and I was my six month pregnant belly. In this moment, Melissa and I met in the liminal space between researcher and participant, our stories drawn together by the weight of motherhood. These examples suggest that the multiplicity of our identities interweave at various points throughout the research process. At times these intersections represented alliance and at other times friction. But regardless of intersection's form, the stories represented in this dissertation reflect the muddled entanglement of the our identities, histories and subjectivities.

This study aims to destabilize structures of power and privilege by contributing to the counter narratives of race, class, segregation, and education, which reveal both the patterns and plurality of African American family experiences. Beyond scrutinizing my intentions in the design of this study as well as my role in the field, I recognize that this document is in of itself a performative act. My aim is for the narratives shared here to further complicate our understanding of a single "Black experience" and challenge the deficit view of communities of color evident within educational research, policy, and the everyday practices of schools.

Complicating the Narratives

I entered this study with particular expectations that were shaped largely by the critical scholarship on segregation, desegregation, and family involvement in education as reviewed in Chapter Two. I anticipated stories that would align the families with larger counternarratives of critique. In particular, I expected family narratives that would highlight the strengths of their African American segregated schools, offer critiques of the implementation and consequences of desegregation, and reveal the critical art of counterstorytelling as a family pedagogy. After completing the interviews it became apparent that the Cooper and Jordan family stories could not be compartmentalized into either the dominant narrative or the counternarratives.

In this section I will discuss the relationship between the Cooper and Jordan family stories and the literature on segregation/desegregation, family involvement in education, and educational mobility. The Cooper and Jordan family stories contribute to the counternarratives of the Jim Crow segregated communities by revealing the strengths of their schools and teachers, countering the negative depictions that dominate popular

memory. With their limited exposure to desegregated schools, most participants did not offer a critique or commentary on the implementation or consequences of school desegregation.

Family involvement in their child's education took many forms, including school and home-based and was also embodied in the choices and values the families shared across generations. However, the Coopers and Jordans did not appear to engage in intergenerational storytelling aimed at critiquing and calling attention to social inequities.

Finally, their mobility narratives tell a story of two families whose elders were committed to providing their children and grandchildren with educational and socio-economic opportunities that will allow for social mobility and academic achievement. Their 'moving up' stories describe moving from the urban schools and neighborhoods toward locations that complement a middle class identity and continue to provide a sense of community that was a foundation of their upbringing. Although this movement initially appears similar to *white flight*, it is distinct in two important ways. First, while Thomas Cooper and Sheryl Jordan moved their families out of their working class neighborhoods, their daughters continued to attend *de facto* segregated African American schools (however, Melissa Jordan attended a predominantly white school for one year). The second distinction lies in the families reinvestment of their resources back into the community from which they left. In the following section I will unpack these complications further.

Segregation and Desegregation

The first and second generations of the Cooper and Jordan families shared rich stories of growing up in both *de jure* and *de facto* segregated community schools. Their memories highlight strong relationships with teachers and administrators, including

lifelong friendships with their educators' families, and mostly positive interactions with peers. These memories contribute to the growing body of counternarratives of the segregated Black schools as locations of strength and educational mobility. However, unlike the counternarratives of desegregation which bring to light the complications and unintended consequences of *Brown*, the families offered little critique or skepticism of desegregation and its cost. When Both Thomas and his daughter, Brianna, were asked about their perspectives on desegregation and whether those perspectives changed since their youth, they suggested that they hadn't spent much time talking or thinking about it with their families or peers. For the Coopers, growing up in segregated communities was the norm. In fact, Brianna, who attended *de facto* segregated schools in the 1980's, noted that she hadn't ever considered her school as segregated. For Brianna, not only was it the only school community she'd known, it was also a positive educational experience .

Similarly, the Jordans abstained from political critique and involvement in desegregation movements. Sheryl Jordan describes her developing understanding of desegregation and civil rights tensions as a process that didn't really come to light until after she moved away from her sharecropping community to Parrish City, decades after *Brown v. Board*. She recalls not comprehending the growing masses of people protesting for and against integration in her community during the 1960's. Unlike the stories of African Americans who were involved in local political movements, boycotts, protests, and freedom rides, Sheryl describes being largely unaware of the civil rights movement that was gaining momentum during her childhood. She suggests that limited access to news sources impacted her family's knowledge and understanding of the politics surrounding integration.

Although the Coopers and Jordans attended segregated schools throughout most of their school careers, Thomas Cooper, Brianna Dawes, and Sheryl Jordan all commented that given the opportunity they would have enthusiastically volunteered to be one of the first to integrate into a white public school during the initial move to integrate in the 1960's. Melissa Jordan was the only participant to respond to this question with apprehension. She emphasized desegregation's repercussions, particularly the changes in teacher-student dynamics in integrated schools. Her critiques, though informed by various experiences and sources, may have also been influenced by her own contrasting experiences at two racially distinct elementary schools. Melissa left the predominantly African American Sampson Hill to briefly attend East Parrish Elementary where she was one of a small number of African American students. She noted a difference between the quality of relationships with teachers at the mostly white East Parrish and the mostly African American Sampson Hill. Melissa described teachers at Sampson Hill who were deeply invested in their students' lives and maintained relationships beyond the classroom walls, while at East Parrish teachers did not provide that same intimacy. Melissa's commentary aligns with some of the counternarrative critiques of *Brown* that are highlighted by the critical scholarship on desegregation. Melissa's perspectives illustrate the consequences of removing influential Black teachers and administrators and placing students of color in integrated schools where they may experience a cultural mismatch and discrimination. Melissa's story further complicates this critique by also noting the positive outcomes of attending the predominantly white elementary school. At East Parrish, she no longer contended with taunting from her African American peers based on her light, brown skin. Her peers and teachers at East Parrish clearly identified her as Black, providing relief

from attacks on her racial identity among her schoolmates of color at Sampson Hill.

Family Involvement in Education

The Cooper and Jordan family stories of involvement in education also straddle both the dominant expectations of involvement as well as the counternarratives of African American commitment to education across generations. Thomas Cooper and Sheryl Jordan recalled their parents', as well as their own, commitment to their children's education and high academic expectations. They also described the positive relationships their parents maintained with educators beyond the physical boundaries of the school. However, since their parents worked full time, their involvement was largely home and value based; only attending school for scheduled events and meetings. These patterns of involvement are consistent with other descriptions of African American involvement in segregated school communities before *Brown*, whereas after desegregation family relationships with schools and teachers took on different forms and expectations (Fields-Smith, 2005).

Both Melissa Jordan and Brianna Dawes maintained relationships with their children's teachers in ways that reflect the dominant and *whitestream* expectations for involvement. While working full time, Melissa and Brianna fulfill home and school-based forms of involvement as well engage their children in various extracurricular sports and cultural activities.

In their work that redefines family involvement in education, Hughes (2005), Knight et al. (2005), Lopez (2001), and Nakagawa (2000) all suggest that some families of color engage in less transparent forms of involvement in education. Many of these less visible forms of involvement, such as counterstorytelling and oppressed family pedagogy, are often overlooked by educators, administrators, and politicians. While the Coopers and

Jordans were involved in their children's education in many traditional ways (i.e. homework support, PTA involvement, communicating concerns with teachers, and attending meetings) their activation of Community Cultural Wealth sought to ensure the educational and social mobility of their children. Such forms of capital may not always be transparent to educators. Among the various strategies of involvement employed by the families, they did not reveal intergenerational conversations that explicitly critiqued or called into question systems of whiteness, racism, or oppression. However, I acknowledge the possibility that the public transcripts shared with me differ from the intergenerational dialogues that occur in their homes when the researcher isn't present. Such untold hidden transcripts may embody the critical art of counterstorytelling.

Educational and Social Mobility

Finally, the Cooper and Jordan family narratives complicate our understandings of educational and social mobility. For the families, social class identity is performed through attire, language, values, and opportunities provided to the next generation. Investment of resources, both symbolic and material, is an important thread in the family stories. In particular, emphasizing the value of education, high academic expectations, and assisting family members as they navigate the systems of schooling were strategies to ensure both social and educational mobility across generations.

Beyond the transmission of values to support their families' mobility, the Coopers and Jordans moved across geographical spaces toward locations that provided a sense of safety and community. While their patterns of movement in some ways paralleled the *white flight* that occurred in many communities post *Brown*, the Cooper and Jordan families' departure from urban neighborhoods and schools differed from the massive white

exodus by maintaining meaningful connections to the communities of their past. For example, Bianna Dawes moved to a suburban, middle class neighborhood across town from where she grew up. However, she continues to reside in a predominantly African American community and serves African American children and families from low income neighborhoods through her work as an educator in the same public school system from which she graduated.

Similarly, after several moves, Sheryl Jordan finally settled in a suburban, middle class, predominantly African American neighborhood (less than a mile away from where Brianna Dawes lives) in Parrish City; far from the rural, sharecropping community of her childhood. In a distinct divergence from *white flight's* signature characteristic of abandoning urban areas for *whiter* pastures, Sheryl Jordan maintained a strong connection to her childhood community as well as the urban residents of Parrish City. Along with another Smithville resident, Sheryl founded a cultural center for children and families in her childhood community. The center, a space to provide educational and cultural enrichment to low income families during the summer months, is intentionally located in Sheryl's former elementary school, paying homage to the education of her youth. Furthermore, Sheryl served the families and children of Parrish City for decades as a social worker.

Notwithstanding their moves toward middle class neighborhoods, the Coopers and Jordans cycled back their resources into their childhood communities. However, both families have avoided the public schools for which they are zoned, opting to send the youngest generation to private or charter schools. Beyond the families' intention to send their children to a school that has strong teachers, high academic standing and appears safe,

they ultimately desired a school that provided a sense of community. Brianna Dawes and Melissa Jordan's choice to send Simon, Isaiah, and Maya to a private or charter school reflects their critique of contemporary schools as unsafe spaces that lack common values, passionate teachers, and rigor. Furthermore, their choices carry on the memory of their childhood classrooms as places of possibility that cultivated their mobility trajectories. Pushing back against a system of schooling that may inhibit their children's success, the families have chosen schools that embody the values represented in the education of their past: community, faith, and commitment to education. Like the palimpsest, memories of their childhood schools are superimposed onto their hopes for the next generation.

Implications

Research

This dissertation aims to deepen our understanding of the patterns as well as the multiplicity of African American experiences of schooling and education. In particular, this study intends to invigorate a dialogue among educational scholars, practitioners, and politicians on the strengths and commitment to education evident across generations of African American families. Moreover, the Cooper and Jordan family narratives complicate the predominate perspectives on African American relationships with education and schooling by emphasizing family experiences as socially, politically, and historically situated. Future studies may examine the local, cross generational experiences of families of color to better understand how intergenerational family histories and pedagogy inform contemporary relationships with schooling and education. Moreover, while this study explored the narratives of social and educational mobility of two families emerging from working class and sharecropping backgrounds toward a middle class identity, more studies should seek to better understand the educational experiences and choices of both

contemporary middle class and working class African American families. Yosso's (2004) framework of Community Cultural Wealth has great potential for future research to analyze the multiple forms of capital activated by communities of color to better understand how they navigate systems of privilege and oppression in hopes for a better future for their children. Methodologically, this study encourages scholars to push against post-positivist perspectives of research aimed at grand narratives and generalizability, and move towards postcritical forms of inquiry that center and destabilize privilege and oppression in ourselves, our research, and society at large.

Policy

Many of the educational reform policies, including those put forth by the Obama administration and those locally enacted in public schools, are influenced by an incomplete understanding of families' educational experiences and expectations. By exploring their relationships to education over time, the Cooper and Jordan family stories reveal a shifting perspective of public schools. While they were once locations of hope and possibility they are now seen as spaces fraught with inequality and limited opportunities for success. Many policies on family-school partnerships typically cite Joyce Epstein and her colleagues' typology of family involvement. While her work has evolved over the years from strictly school based involvement to now including home based involvement, it is still limited by a narrow perspectives of what constitutes educational involvement. For the Cooper and Jordan families, involvement took the form of an intergenerational pedagogy that included more than PTA meetings and homework support. Messages of a strong family identity, connection to their past, movements across communities, and the choice not to enroll their children in public school are all forms of their commitment to education. Future policy on

family-school-community partnership would be strengthened by staying local. While school districts across the country require their schools to document and enforce various forms of family involvement programs, they often lack a clear understanding the socio-cultural and historical contexts of the communities in which they serve. Policies emerge from the ground up that are rooted in the local and informed by the experiences of their community members, are far more likely to yield success.

Public Schools & Teacher Education

This work has implications for public school educators and teacher education programs, in particular at the elementary education level, by emphasizing the relevance of local historical narratives and counternarratives in understanding student and family perspectives toward schooling and education. Such historical perspectives of diverse families are often omitted from teacher education curricula. Recently, I taught a course entitled, “Families, Communities, and Culture” for elementary undergraduate students. Through the process of developing the syllabus, I found that the texts commonly used to teach this course neglect to include critical or historical perspectives on families. I hope findings from this study can be used to support pre-service teachers and in-service teachers understanding of the complexities of family-school relationships. Furthermore, the narratives which emerge from this study may encourage teachers to seek a deeper understanding of their own school community’s history in order to appreciate the perspectives and histories of the families they serve.

This dissertation, in both method and content, encourages scholars, teachers, politicians, and teacher educators to honor the multiple interpretations of family experiences with education and draw to the forefront of our discussions how the unequal

distribution of power and resources affects families in their communities and schools. Postcritical research creates more than new semantics and rhetoric. It helps us develop a language through which to understand and talk about the lived experiences of families and the messy nature of critical research. Henry Giroux (1988) suggests that in order for social change to occur, our critique must be paired with possibility. By exploring how history, ideology, and power are positioned in the grand narratives, counter narratives, and everyday lives of families, teachers, and researchers we can more effectively cultivate justice in the soil of our critique.

Conclusion & (Im)Possibilities

In this dissertation, I interpreted the family narratives to suggest that an intergenerational family pedagogy, shared within largely segregated communities, protected them from some of the oppressive conditions that many desegregated schools and communities faced. Through various forms of cultural capital and intergenerational pedagogy, the families ensured that their children and grandchildren could access educational opportunities that were not available to them or their elders. The families also sought educational opportunities which *were* afforded to them, but are no longer easily accessible in contemporary public schools. The stories that underscore the strengths of the segregated community schools of the past expose a shift when segregated *education* (either *de jure* or *de facto*) became segregated *schooling*, and was no longer a suitable option for their children and grandchildren.

Cecelski (1994) noted a sense of urgency in his research on the counter stories of the Black community schools. As elder generations who experienced Jim Crow and desegregation age and pass away their stories are likely to become faded, or worse, untold.

This dissertation responds to this urgency by contributing cross-generational narratives to both our academic discourses as well as the Cooper and Jordan families through family narrative archives.

The stories we tell and retell about African American experiences with segregation and desegregation are directly related to power. The dominant narratives are stories that become reified. Through these reified tellings, they lose their origin and depth and simply reiterate the power of an incomplete story. This dissertation hopes to complicate the reified single story and add to our changing understandings of African American educational experiences. But even these stories, rich in narrative dimensions, are always incomplete. Reflexivities of discomfort ultimately lie in the recognition that the possibilities of our critical research are contingent on acknowledging their impossibilities. The stories shared here invite further interpretations, optional readings, and honor the impossibilities of "getting the story right." I close this dissertation with the poignant words of Nigerian author, Chimamanda Adichie, from her talk entitled, *The Danger of a Single Story* (2009). Adichie reminds us that stories are powerful, having the ability to "break the dignity of a people" or "restore broken dignity." It is my hope that the Cooper and Jordan stories push against the single story of African American education and move the conversation forward.

The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story. The consequence of the single story is this, it robs a people of dignity...it emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar....stories have been used to dispossess and malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair broken dignity...When we realize that there is never a single story, about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.

APPENDIX
Generation 1 & Generation 2
Interview Guide

The purpose of this oral history interview is to better understand the ways you and your family experience education across generations. In particular, in this interview we will discuss your memories of family, schooling, education, segregation, and desegregation. This interview will be audio recorded. Audio recording is very important for this research because it allows me to capture the entire interview. The recording also allows me to be fully engaged with the interview conversation. You have the right to request the audio recorder to be turned off at any time. In the event that the recorder is turned off, I will just take notes to capture what is said.

Demographic/Background information

1. How long have you lived in Parrish City?
 - Where were you born?
 - Who did you live with growing up?
 - How long did you attend Parrish City Public Schools? Did you attend schools anywhere else?
 - What year did you graduate high school?

Memories of Neighborhood

1. How would you describe your neighborhood growing up?
 - a. What did your childhood home look like?
 - b. Please describe the people with whom you spent a lot of time as w child?

Memories of Schooling and Education

2. What memories from when you were a child seem really important to you or stand out in your mind?
 - a. how would you describe your elementary school?
 - b. Please share any memories of your favorite teacher.
 - c. A memory of a time you struggled in school?
 - d. Please share any memories of a close childhood friend.
 - e. What values or messages were shared repeatedly in your family?
 - f. What values or messages do you think you shared with your children?

Memories of Segregation/ Desegregation

3. What do you remember about school during desegregation
 - a. Where were you going to school/living when schools in Parrish City began to desegregate?
 - b. How do you remember feeling about desegregation at the time?
 - c. How do you feel about desegregation now?
 - d. What memories do you have about your family members talking to you about desegregation
 - e. What stories about desegregation have you shared with your children or grandchildren?

Memories of Elder Generations

4. How were your parents or family members involved in your education or schooling?
 - a. Please share a memory you have of your parents' involvement in your education or schooling?
5. What memories do you have of your parents talking to you about their education?
 - a. What about your parent's education do you recall them sharing with you?

Memories of Child/Grandchild's Experiences

6. Please tell me about your child's experiences in school?
 - a. Please share any memories about your child's experiences in school that seem to stand out in your mind?
 - b. Please share a memory of a time when you or your child was really happy, related to school.
 - c. Please share a memory of a time when you or your child struggled in school.
7. What do you know about your grandchild's experiences with elementary school?
 - a. What memories do you have of talking with your grandchild about school or education.
 - b. What values do you hope to pass down to your grandchildren?

Second Interview Guide Thomas Cooper

Memories of your neighborhood

- 1) Can you tell me a little bit more about your memories of your neighborhood where you grew up. Where was this neighborhood located?

- 2) How would you describe your neighborhood?
- 3) How would you describe your family's economic status growing up? Was this a similar to the other folks in your neighborhood/friends?
- 4) How has this neighborhood changed since you were growing up?
- 5) Can you describe the neighborhoods where you lived while G2 was growing up?
 - a) How would you describe the overall economic status of families in that neighborhood?
 - b) How would you describe your family's economic status while your children were growing up?
 - c) To your knowledge how have these neighborhoods changed?
 - d) How would you describe G2's experiences at Sampson Hill?
- 6) What words would you use to describe your own schooling experiences growing up?
 - a) how was your schooling and education different from your daughters and grandchildren?
 - b) In what ways do you think East Parrish has changed since you were there?
- 7) *Memories of segregation, racism, integration*
 - a) What was your impression (experiences with members) of the Greenpoint community while you were growing up?
 - b) What do you remember about Parrish City when facilities and schools were still segregated?
 - c) What do you remember about civil rights movements, protests, or boycotts in Parrish City?
 - d) What do you remember about the unrest after MLK's assassination?
 - e) What do you recall about the labor protests at F.U. in 1967/1968?
 - f) What do you recall about school desegregation in Parrish City?
 - g) Do you think you would have volunteered to integrate into a white h.s. if you had the opportunity ? Why/why not?
 - h) Would your parents have supported you?
 - i) Would you have volunteered your daughters?
 - j) How do you think you learned about racism? Do you have any specific memories that come to mind?
 - k) How do you think your daughter (s) may have learned about racism?
- 8) *Schooling Today & Family Involvement*
 - a) Can you talk to me about your daughter's decision to send her children to private and charter school?

- b) How would your grandchildren's schooling be different if they attended a public elementary?
 - c) How would you characterize your parents relationship with your school and education when you were growing up?
 - d) How would you describe your relationship with school and education when your daughters were in school?
 - e) How would your involvement in your grandchildren's education and school?
- 9) *Your Elders Experiences*
- a) What do you know about your ancestors, your grandparents parents and further back?
 - b) How would you describe your parent's schooling? How was it different or similar to yours?
 - c) Have you shared your memories of growing up with your children? Grandchildren?
 - d) What other stories about your upbringing do you hope to share (or have shared) with your children. Why are these stories important?
 - e) Important messages you heard over and over again from elders?

Second Interview Guide Sheryl Jordan

Neighborhood and Community

1. What brought you to Parrish City? How do you like living here?

a) How are the communities here in Parrish City different from the communities in Smithville?

b) How would you describe your family's economic status growing up in Smithville? Was this a similar SES to the other folks in your neighborhood/friends?

2. Can you describe the neighborhoods in Parrish City where you lived while G2 was growing up?

a) How would you describe the overall SES of families in that neighborhood?

b) how would you describe your family's SES while living in Parrish City?

3. To your knowledge how have these neighborhoods changed?

Memories of School

4. How would you describe G2's experiences at Sampson Hill?

a) How would you describe G2's experiences at East Parrish?

b) How were these schools different or similar?

5. Do you have an impression about how the schools where G2 attended have changed since she was there?

6. How would you use to describe your own schooling experiences growing up?

a) how was your schooling and education different from your daughters and grandchildren?

Memories of segregation, racism, and desegregation

1. At our last meeting you shared a story of a time when you observed protests and tension surrounding school integration while you were working at a Smithville elementary. Do you recall any other memories of desegregation while in Smithville or anywhere else you lived or visited?

a) Do you recall any stories about racial tensions here in Parrish City?

b) do you think you would have volunteered to integrate into a white h.s.? why/why not? would your parents have wanted you to? Would you have volunteered your daughters?

b) What do you recall about 'race riots' at your daughter's high school that G2 experienced?

3. How do you think you learned about racism? Do you have any specific memories of where you may have learned about it?

a) How do you think your daughter may have learned about racism?

Grandchildren's Schooling & Family Involvement

1. Can you talk to me about your daughter's decision to send her children to PCA?

2. How would your grandchildren's schooling be different if they attended a PCPS elementary?

3. How would you characterize the relationship between families and school when you were growing up? How would you describe the relationship between families and school when your daughters were in school? How would you describe the relationship between families and school where you child attends school now?

Your Elders Experiences

1. What do you know about your ancestors, your grandparents parents and further back?

2. How would you describe your parent's schooling? How was it different or similar to yours?

3. In our first meeting, you described in rich detail what it was like growing up in Smithville on the farm and in your town. Have you shared those memories with your children? Grandchildren?
4. What other stories about your upbringing do you hope to share (or have shared) with your children. Why are these stories important?

Brianna Dawes Second Interview

Memories of your neighborhood:

1. Can you describe the neighborhood that you grew up in?
2. How would you describe the SES of the neighborhood where you grew up?
3. How would you describe your father's family's SES growing up?
4. How has the neighborhood changed since you were living there?
5. How has your elementary school, Sampson Hill changed since you've been there?
 - a) Would you want to send your children there if you lived in that neighborhood?
6. How has your H.S. and the surrounding changed since you've been there?

Memories of segregation, racism, and desegregation

- 1. Do you recall any memories of talking about desegregation or segregation with your family or with your teachers?
 - a) do you think you would have volunteered to integrate into a white h.s.? why/why not?
 - b) would you have volunteered your children?
- 3. How do you think you learned about racism? Do you have a specific memory of where you may have learned about it? Recall talking with your parents or elders about their experiences?

Children's Schooling and Education Today

1. Would you say that your experiences working for PCPS have influenced your decisions about your children's schooling and education? How?
2. How would your children's schooling be different if they attended a PCPS elementary?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between families and school when you were growing up? How would you describe the relationship between families and school

now, where you work? How would you describe the relationship between families and school where your child attends school?

Your Elders Experiences

1. What do you know about your ancestors, your grandparents parents and further back?
2. How would you describe your father's schooling? How was it different or similar to yours?
3. What messages do you think you learned from your father (parents)?
4. What stories about your upbringing do you hope to share (or have shared) with your children. Why are these stories important?

Melissa Jordan Second Interview

Memories of your neighborhood:

1. Can you describe the neighborhoods that you grew up in?
2. How would you describe the SES of the neighborhood where you grew up?
3. How would you describe your family's economic growing up? What about your mom's economic status when she was growing up?
4. How has the neighborhood changed since you were living there?
5. How has your elementary school changed since you've been there?

a) Would you want to send your children there if you lived in that neighborhood?
How would their schooling/education be different if they attended public school instead of PCA?

6. How has the East Parrish neighborhoods changed since you lived there?

Memories of segregation, racism, and desegregation

1. Do you recall any memories of talking about desegregation or segregation with your family or with your teachers?
 - a) do you think you would have volunteered to integrate into a white h.s.? why/why not?
 - b) Would your mom have supported this decision.
 - c) Would you have volunteered your children?

2. Can you talk a little bit more about your memories of the racial tensions at High School? What do you remember about that time?

3. How do you think you learned about racism? Do you have any specific memories of where you may have learned about it?

Children's Schooling and Schooling Today

1. Can you talk about how you came to the decision to send your children to PCA?

a) What were some of your sister's experiences working in the public schools?

2. How would your children's schooling be different if they attended a PCPS elementary?

3. How would you characterize the relationship between families and school when you were growing up? Your mom's relationship with the school?

a) How would you describe the relationship between families and school now?

b) Your involvement in your child's education?

c) How would you describe the relationship between families and school at PCA?

Your Elders Experiences

1. What do you know about your ancestors, your grandparents parents and further back?

2. How would you describe your mother's education? How was it different or similar to yours?

3. What messages do you think you learned from your mother? grandparents?

4. What stories about your upbringing do you hope to share (or have shared) with your children. Why are these stories important?

Generation 3 Interview Guide

I'd like to talk with you about your experiences with school and your family. The purpose of interview is to better understand the ways you and your family experience education across generations. This interview will be audio recorded. Audio recording is very important for this research because it allows me to fully capture all the words shared in this interview. The recording also allows me to be fully involved with our conversation. You have the right to request the audio recorder to be turned off at any time. In the event that the recorder is turned off, I will just take notes to record what is said.

Also, as mentioned before if you have any pictures, projects, or other important objects that are related to your experiences with school or your family, I'd love for you to share them with me during this interview.

1. What grade are you in?
2. What's your favorite thing to do in school?
3. What don't you like to do in school?
4. What's your favorite thing to do outside of school
5. What do you usually do when you come home from school?
6. Do you have a special memory of a time you spent with your grandparent (other relevant family member)? Can you describe this memory?
7. Does your mom/ dad/grandparent ever tell you stories about when they were in school?
8. Please share one of the stories your (family member) told to you about a time when they were a child.

Family Group Story Sharing Event Semi-Structured Conversation Guide

Thank you all for attending this family group story sharing event. The purpose of today's meeting is for family members across generations to share their stories of schooling and education with one another. We will also take some time after all stories have been shared to reflect on the experience.

Each family member will have the opportunity to share a story that describes a memory of an experience with school or education. Some of the stories may also be related to school desegregation or segregation. You may choose to share a story that emerged during our one-on-one interviews or you may share a story that you have not told before. I will audio record this group event. If at any time you want me to turn off the recorder please let me know and I will do so.

1. Each family member will share a story.
2. After each family member has shared we will discuss:
 - What were some of the stories that were shared today?
 - What surprised you? And what didn't surprise you?
 - How did you feel listening to your family member's stories?
 - Have you heard any of the stories shared today before? If so, how was it different experiencing it today?
 - What will you take away from this story sharing experience?

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